The Golden Compass

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PHILIP PULLMAN

Philip Pullman's father was a Royal Air Force pilot and when the family wasn't traveling for his job, they spent most of their time in North Wales. His father died when Pullman was seven and his mother remarried. Pullman discovered John Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a teenager and was later drawn to the illustrations of William Blake. Both would go on to be major influences in Pullman's later work, *His Dark Materials* especially. Beginning in the late 1960s, Pullman taught middle-grade students and wrote children's plays. These plays inspired his first children's book, *Count Karlstein*. He began writing *His Dark Materials* in 1993 while teaching at Oxford and after it was published, Pullman turned to writing full time. The entire series has won numerous awards—particularly *The Golden Compass* and *The Amber Spyglass*. Throughout his life, Pullman has been an advocate for not age- and gender-labeling children's books, and he's spoken out on behalf of authors' rights to fair compensation for speaking engagements and e-book library loans. As an agnostic and critic of Christianity, Pullman has delighted in the criticism lobbed at *His Dark Materials* and even asked his publisher to include a critical quote from 1999 in *The Amber Spyglass*.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Magisterium in *The Golden Compass* is modeled closely after the organization of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the real-life church, the Magisterium has a pope that leads it in making decisions about what is considered to be the correct interpretation of scripture. The control that the Magisterium has over society in The Golden Compass more closely mirrors a historical version of the church than a contemporary one, and the way that characters discuss the fate of Dr. Rusakov (the man who discovered Dust) specifically draws on the way that the church developed the wider Catholic Inquisition (which manifested as the Spanish, Portuguese, and Roman Inquisitions) to investigate and crack down on everything from witchcraft to scientific discoveries that challenged church doctrine. The Inquisitions arrested and tried scientists like Galileo Galilei and Gerolamo Cardano—who, incidentally, developed the mechanism that allows compass rings to rotate.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Pullman wrote the *His Dark Materials* series (*The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*) with the intention of creating an inverse retelling of John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, targeted at children and teens. He has also cited the work of William Blake and Heinrich von Kleist as influences on the series. His skepticism of religion and his intended audience means that he's often compared with C.S. Lewis, whose *Chronicles of Narnia* series is rooted in Christian imagery and portrays religious teachings in a positive light. Pullman published *His Dark Materials* around the same time as J.K. Rowling was publishing the *Harry Potter* books, and both series sparked outrage and boycotts from religious groups (though Pullman has expressed surprise that Harry Potter has received far more pushback than his books). Other books that have been banned or the subject of controversy on religious grounds include Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and John McGahern's *The Dark*, which has, like *The Golden Compass*, also faced criticism for its treatment of puberty and sexuality.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Golden Compass
- **When Written:** 1993-1994
- **Where Written:** Oxford, England
- **When Published:** 1995
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Young Adult
- **Setting:** Europe in a parallel universe
- **Climax:** Lord Asriel sacrifices Roger
- **Antagonist:** There are a number of antagonists, most of whom are aligned with the Magisterium (the church) and/or the "child cutters."
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Too Much of a Good Thing. Lyra's fascination with the fact that people can't consume polar bear livers isn't a fact that's only true in her fictional world, as polar bear livers contain an amount of vitamin A that's poisonous for humans (this is also true for a number of Arctic predators, like bearded seals and arctic foxes). The real-life early polar explorers who ate polar bear livers died horrific deaths: their skin peeled off, they fell into comas, and they died within a few days.

Long Live the Library. As one of his many causes, Pullman got involved with a campaign to push back on a 2011 attempt to close 600 libraries across England. In addition to calling books the second-most important piece of technology after the wheel, he also stated that keeping libraries open and books accessible are essential weapons in the "war against stupidity."

PLOT SUMMARY

11-year-old Lyra and her dæmon, Pan, sneak into the Retiring Room at Jordan College so they can see what the Scholars do in there. She sees something that shocks her: the Master poisons wine intended for her beloved but terrifying uncle, Lord Asriel. When Lord Asriel himself appears, Lyra shows herself and warns him. He allows her to stay hidden and watch his presentation about something called Dust, which he's studying in the North. He shows a photograph of the northern lights and a city in the lights. She doesn't understand most of what he and the Scholars say, but they mention something called the *panserbjørne* and someone who, oddly, doesn't have a dæmon. In private later, the Master tells the Librarian that he was trying to protect Lyra from Lord Asriel and from her destiny, which is to unwittingly lead someone to their sacrifice.

Lyra spends her time running wild around Jordan College and Oxford with her best friend, Roger. Her idyll comes to an end with the Gobblers, who begin stealing poor children and shipping them north by luring them in with a glamorous woman named Mrs. Coulter. The narrator explains how she tricked a boy named Tony Makarios. Lyra is obsessed with the Gobblers but is terrified when they arrive in Oxford and steal a gyptian boy named Billy Costa and, possibly, Roger. That night, the Master invites her to dinner with him and with Mrs. Coulter. Mrs. Coulter is enchanting and Lyra is thrilled when she learns that she's going to go live with her. In the morning before she leaves, the Master gives Lyra a device called an alethiometer and tells her to keep it secret. Lyra is extremely confused.

Lyra is happy until one night that Mrs. Coulter throws a cocktail party. Mrs. Coulter loses her temper when Lyra insists on wearing a purse containing the alethiometer in the house, and Lyra and Pan realize that Mrs. Coulter's dæmon—a golden monkey—is spying on them. At the party, Lyra realizes that the Gobblers are actually the General Oblation Board, the organization that Mrs. Coulter runs. She also overhears that the panserbjørne—armored bears—have imprisoned Lord Asriel. Horrified, Lyra runs away. Tony Costa (Billy's older brother) and the gyptians rescue Lyra from kidnappers and his mother, Ma Costa, decides to take her to the fens with them for a gyptian meeting. They keep her hidden, as the police are looking for her.

At the meeting, the gyptian king, John Faa, says that they need to keep Lyra safe and announces a plan to rescue the kidnapped children. After the meeting, he and an old man, Farder Coram, speak to Lyra privately. She tells them everything she knows about the Gobblers, Mrs. Coulter, and Dust. She also shows them the alethiometer. Farder Coram tells her that the device tells the truth, and suggests that she might need to take it to Lord Asriel. They also tell Lyra that Lord Asriel is her father and Mrs. Coulter is her mother, while Ma Costa nursed Lyra as a baby. Three days later, the gyptians reconvene and begin to plan their expedition. John Faa refuses to take Lyra. Lyra attaches herself to Farder Coram and discovers that if she concentrates, she can read the alethiometer. One afternoon as she puzzles over it, an injured man returns from a spy mission and Lyra realizes that the alethiometer was trying to tell her about it. Because of this, John Faa decides to take Lyra.

Lyra has to hide as the gyptian men take her north, where they'll get a ship to Trollesund. Farder Coram allows her outside one evening after Lyra again can't interpret the alethiometer, but they quickly realize what it was trying to tell her when two "spy-flies" attack Pan. They capture one and ascertain that Mrs. Coulter sent them. Farder Coram seals the captured one in a tin. Lyra soon decides that she loves the sea. Pan loves it too and experiments with being a dolphin. This worries Lyra, but a sailor, Jerry, assures her that Pan will eventually settle in a form and that settling is a good thing—Lyra will know who she is when Pan settles.

In Trollesund, Farder Coram takes Lyra to visit Dr. Lanselius, the consul for the witches. Farder Coram saved a witch 40 years ago and she offered him a favor in return. Dr. Lanselius shares that there's a company in town that secretly imports children and takes them inland. He then asks Lyra about the alethiometer. While she's outside playing, Dr. Lanselius tells Farder Coram that Lyra is destined to save the world. He also suggests that the gyptians engage Iorek Byrnison, an armored bear. When they meet Iorek, Lyra finds him disturbing, as he doesn't have a dæmon. He agrees to work for the gyptians if they can get him his armor back. That night, Lyra gets up in the middle of the night to look at the Aurora and sees the city. The witch Serafina Pekkala's goose dæmon, Kaisa, interrupts her. He tells John Faa and Farder Coram how to get to Bolvanger, the terrifying place where the children go. He says it's connected to "Dust," and mentions that Lord Asriel wants to use Dust to build a bridge between this world and other worlds, something that's politically complicated. They discuss the bears and their role in the conflict and Lyra insists that they need to help Iorek get his armor back.

In the morning, Lyra joins the gyptians in a cafe and a balloonist, Lee Scoresby, tips Lyra off to the fact that she needs to help Iorek get his armor now, before the townsfolk move it. She runs off but stops when she gets close to Iorek, too afraid to approach. Pan turns into a badger to try to pull her closer, which physically hurts, but he succeeds. Iorek explains that his armor is his soul and he needs it to be whole. Lyra tells him where his armor is and when Iorek emerges wearing it, he's formidable and seems whole. The gyptians, Iorek, and Lee Scoresby move out that afternoon. During a rest, the alethiometer tells Lyra about a "ghost" in a nearby village. John Faa agrees to let her check it out. In the village, Lyra discovers a horrifying sight: Tony Makarios, who has been severed from his dæmon. Lyra brings Tony back to the gyptians, but he dies a few hours later. Later that day, Iorek and Lyra discuss souls and

Iorek shows her that bears can't be tricked. He suggests that they have a different way of knowing things, and it's the same kind of knowing that allows Lyra to read the alethiometer.

Not long after, Tartars ambush the gyptians and kidnap Lyra. They don't know who she is, so Lyra tells them her name is Lizzie. The Tartars take Lyra to what she assumes is Bolvanger. Sister Clara lets Lyra keep the alethiometer, and Lyra sneaks the spy-fly into her bag. The girls in Lyra's dormitory tell her that the doctors test them for Dust and, one by one, children disappear and never come back. They also mention that Mrs. Coulter is coming in two days. The next day, Lyra finds Roger. They pretend to ignore each other until lunchtime, when a girl says that she was with Tony Makarios when they took him. They told him he was going to undergo a "little cut." When Lyra finds Billy Costa later, she shares that the gyptians are coming, and Roger points out that kids can get into the ceiling to hide. A doctor announces that there will be a fire drill later.

The doctors test Lyra for Dust that afternoon. During the tests, the fire alarm goes off. They agree to let Lyra wear the furs she came with. Outside, Lyra incites a snowball fight so she, Billy, and Roger can look around secretly. Kaisa joins them and helps Lyra break into an outbuilding, where she finds the ghostly dæmons of severed children. He rescues the dæmons and Lyra rejoins the kids.

Mrs. Coulter arrives as the doctors are getting children back inside. One girl tells Lyra that Mrs. Coulter usually speaks to the doctors in the conference room. That night, Lyra crawls into the ceiling and listens in on Mrs. Coulter's conversation. She and the doctors discuss a new device for severing children and the escaped dæmons. When Mrs. Coulter leaves, the doctors discuss how cruel she is. Lyra involuntarily cries out and they discover her. They decide to perform intercision on her to keep her quiet, but just before they perform the procedure, Mrs. Coulter walks in and rescues Lyra. Mrs. Coulter pretends to be concerned about Lyra, comforts her, and tells her that Dust is bad. She wants the alethiometer, says that Lord Asriel shouldn't obtain it, and believes that it's in Lyra's pack. In the pack she discovers the spy-fly tin and the creature flies in her face. Lyra runs away, sets the kitchen on fire, and then leads kids away from Bolvanger. Iorek saves them from the Tartar guards and eventually, the kids reach the gyptians. There, Mrs. Coulter attempts to kidnap Lyra and Roger again, but Lee Scoresby rescues the children and takes them up in his balloon with Iorek. The witches pull them towards Svalbard.

As the balloon travels, Lee Scoresby and Serafina Pekkala discuss the ethics involved in destiny. Serafina says that they're all subject to destiny but, in order to feel in control, people must act like they have free will. Later, she and Lyra discuss what makes a bear susceptible to trickery. Serafina suggests that bears can be tricked when they act like humans. Not long after, cliff=ghasts (aggressive flying creatures) attack the balloon and Lyra falls out. Two bears find her and take her to Iofur Raknison's palace, which reeks and is covered in bird droppings. The alethiometer tells Lyra that Iorek is coming, and an imprisoned Scholar tells Lyra that if Iorek comes, Iofur will kill him. Lyra remembers that what Iofur wants most in the world is a dæmon. When a guard comes to deliver food, she uses this knowledge to get to Iofur and privately tells him that she's actually Iorek's dæmon, but he can win her for himself if he fights Iorek in single combat. Iofur agrees immediately. When Iorek arrives, Lyra tells him what she's done. Iorek is thrilled and impressed that Lyra could trick Iofur. He uses this to his advantage, tricking Iofur into losing in their fight. He begins to dismantle the palace and then agrees to take Lyra and Roger to Lord Asriel.

At his house, Lord Asriel is frantic when he sees Lyra, but relaxes when he sees Roger. That night, he tells Lyra that the Magisterium believes that Dust is proof of original sin, and Mrs. Coulter believes that separating a child from their dæmon will keep them from experiencing original sin. Lord Asriel doesn't think this takes things far enough; he wants to harness the energy created when a child is severed from their dæmon to cross into the other universe. He insists that he doesn't need the alethiometer, which confuses Lyra. Lyra wakes up in the middle of the night and learns that Lord Asriel took Roger to use in his experiment. Iorek carries her up the mountain in pursuit. They stop briefly so that Iorek can fight Mrs. Coulter's cronies, but Iorek ultimately has to let Lyra go on her own. At the top of the mountain, Lyra is unable to stop Lord Asriel as he attaches a wire to Roger's dæmon, which lights up the Aurora and rips open the sky to reveal a bridge to another universe, killing Roger in the process. Mrs. Coulter arrives and she and Lord Asriel kiss, but she refuses to go with him. Lord Asriel walks over the bridge. Alone, Lyra and Pan decide that Dust must actually be a good thing. They decide to cross the bridge too so they can find the source of Dust.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Lyra – The 11-year-old protagonist of the novel. Lyra is skinny, blond, and scrappy. She detests being clean and wants only to run wild with her friends at Jordan College and in Oxford. While her dæmon, Pan, takes a more cautious approach to life, Lyra has no issue breaking rules and is a skilled liar. She most often spends time with poor children like her best friend, Roger. Lyra grows up believing that she's an orphan and that the important Lord Asriel is her uncle. He serves as her connection to the wider world of politics, knowledge that she uses only to impress and lord over her friends. Lyra struggles deeply with the moral implications of everything she sees around her, and as time goes on, develops a keen sense of right, wrong, and compassion. She does this in part by learning to read the alethiometer, a truth-telling device that the Master

gives her before she leaves Jordan College. Once Lyra figures out how the alethiometer is supposed to work, she quickly learns how to relax her mind and read what it says—a skill that takes most people years to learn. In addition to developing her sense of morality, Lyra is also deeply interested in souls, what it means to be human, and how different races in her world conceptualize being alive. The bear Iorek Byrnison teaches her about how bears think of souls. While Lyra initially pities him and is afraid of him, the two become extremely close after she helps Iorek retrieve his armor, which houses his soul. More than anything, Lyra fears Mrs. Coulter, a glamorous but cruel woman, and intercision, the process of cutting a person's dæmon away from them. While imprisoned at Bolvanger, Lyra puts all her skills together to orchestrate the captive children's escape and, most importantly for her, rescues Roger. However, Lyra's unwillingness to question Lord Asriel's goodness leads her to unwittingly lead Roger to his sacrificial death at Lord Asriel's hands. Following this, Lyra and Pan decide that Dust, which all adults fear and want to destroy, must be good, so they follow Lord Asriel into the city in the Aurora.

Mrs. Coulter – The primary antagonist of the novel. It's never stated how old Mrs. Coulter is, but she looks young and is extremely beautiful, with pale skin and dark hair. Her dæmon, a golden monkey, is similarly beautiful. She's both glamorous and alluring, which, according to Lord Asriel, makes her the obvious person for the Magisterium to let study Dust and use children as test subjects. In addition to being able to trick the children into coming with her willingly, her alluring nature means that people are far less likely to take issue with the unethical things she does via the General Oblation Board. Lyra is similarly entranced by Mrs. Coulter and her glamorous lifestyle, and so agrees to go live with her. However, Mrs. Coulter eventually shows Lyra that she doesn't intend to take Lyra to the North, as promised, and instead seems to want Lyra to just be a beautiful pet. Lyra later learns that Mrs. Coulter is actually her mother, and after her affair with Lord Asriel and Lyra's subsequent birth led to Lord Asriel killing Mr. Coulter, Mrs. Coulter decided she wanted nothing to do with Lyra. Once Lyra begins to see through Mrs. Coulter's glamour, Mrs. Coulter begins to look terrifying and evil. She and her dæmon are cruel and controlling; doctors at Bolvanger talk about the savage pleasure Mrs. Coulter seems to get from watching children undergo intercision. Mrs. Coulter also proves herself to be extremely hypocritical—she insists that intercision is a good thing and that Dust is bad, but both Lyra and Mrs. Coulter know that intercision on children in particular isn't safe or beneficial, as it causes patients to die. Mrs. Coulter simply doesn't care about the children who undergo the procedure. Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel reunite after Lord Asriel opens up a bridge to a parallel universe. Though the two are still clearly in love, Mrs. Coulter refuses to accompany Lord Asriel to the other universe.

Iorek Byrnison – A panserbjørne (armored bear) from Svalbard who was once a prince. Years before the start of the novel, Iorek wrongfully killed another bear in a suspicious incident, and as punishment was banished and had his armor taken away. When Lyra and Farder Coram find him, he's working in Trollesund as a metalworker in exchange for alcohol and meat, and the townsfolk have the armor he made himself in hiding. In this state without his armor, Iorek is a terrifying and uncanny sight. He's clearly not human, but he's also deeply unhappy and his unhappiness makes him even scarier. Lyra believes that he's so scary because he doesn't have a dæmon, but Iorek explains that bears' souls are contained in their armor rather than in a dæmon. With this information, Lyra helps Iorek get his armor back. This turns Iorek into Lyra's fiercest protector and a loyal, driven, and compassionate member of the gyptian rescue mission. Iorek is instrumental in teaching Lyra about how souls function for different races in their world, and specifically about how the bears' culture functions. He makes it clear that bears can't be tricked, and also offers insight into human evolution when he notes that human beings used to share this quality but have since lost it. Iorek is thrilled when he discovers that Lyra managed to trick Iofur Raknison, the king of the bears who desperately wants to be human, into agreeing to fight him in one-on-one combat. Because Iorek is comfortable in his armor and in his identity while Iofur isn't, Iorek wins the battle and assumes his rightful place as king of the bears. His loyalty to Lyra means that he continues to help her pursue her goals until he physically can't anymore.

Pan – Lyra's dæmon; his full name is Pantalaimon. Though he can still change his form since Lyra hasn't yet reached puberty, Pan spends much of his time as an ermine or wildcat—or, when he and Lyra are scared or upset, as a mean polecat. Pan balances out Lyra's wild nature by stubbornly encouraging her to follow the rules and stay out of other people's business. He has keen instincts when it comes to evaluating other people and understands long before Lyra does that Mrs. Coulter and her golden monkey are entirely uninterested in taking him and Lyra to the North. He recognizes that Mrs. Coulter wants to simply turn Lyra into a pretty pet. As a dæmon, Pan can see and sense things that Lyra can't as a human. He's extremely put off when Lyra switches around coins representing dead Scholars' dæmons in the crypts at Jordan, as he recognizes the importance of having one's dæmon, even in death. He also becomes hysterical when they find Tony Makarios, who has no dæmon. Pan and Lyra love each other fiercely and vow often that they'll never be separated, a promise that comes into question when doctors at Bolvanger discover Lyra eavesdropping and unsuccessfully attempt to perform intercision on Lyra and Pan. As children, Pan and Lyra often test the limits of how far they can separate from each other and how much pain they can cause. Following Roger's death, Pan seems to come around more to Lyra's adventurous nature and suggests that they step into the other world so that they can

find the source of Dust.

Lord Asriel – Lyra initially believes that Lord Asriel is her uncle—in reality, he's her father. A tall, imposing, and wild-looking man, Lord Asriel was once a very powerful and well-connected person in politics. He lost everything, however, after Lyra's birth, when he was convicted for wrongfully killing Mrs. Coulter's husband, who was upset to discover that Mrs. Coulter had given birth to Lord Asriel's illegitimate daughter. Despite losing his assets, Lord Asriel continued to hold sway in political and theological circles, and he often leads expeditions to the North to study the Aurora and Dust. For the most part, he takes little interest in Lyra except to make sure that she's healthy. Lyra both admires and fears Lord Asriel. When she learns that Lord Asriel is being held prisoner by the panserbjørne (armored bears) on Svalbard, Lyra vows to rescue Lord Asriel and take him the alethiometer, which she believes he needs. This interpretation, however, turns out to be incorrect. When Lyra finally reaches Lord Asriel, she discovers just how cruel and unfeeling he is. He sees no issue with never telling Lyra that he's her father and dismisses her anger and sense of betrayal. He does, however, explain his research to her: there are parallel universes accessible through the Aurora and one of them contains the source of Dust, which he wants to destroy. His cruelty comes to the forefront when he kills Roger in pursuit of this research.

Lee Scoresby – A balloonist from Texas whom John Faa hires in Trollesund. He's a lean and scrappy man with a similarly scrappy hare dæmon. He has, in the past, sold his ballooning services and fought in several battles alongside Iorek. A loyal friend, Lee Scoresby helps Lyra and Iorek get Iorek's armor back, and then guards the armor while Iorek fetches seal blubber. Despite enjoying his job, Lee Scoresby wants to know exactly what he's getting into, especially when he learns that the gyptians and the witches are going to ask him to land on Svalbard, a dangerous proposition. In a conversation with Serafina Pekkala, Lee Scoresby says that for him, his involvement is all about the money and not at all about his emotional investment in what's going on. Ballooning isn't something he loves to do for the sake of it—it's a way to make money and to eventually fund his farm in Texas. He wants to make sure that he has a choice in the matter of his participation, as he sees destiny as something unethical that deprives him of choice. He's extremely kind to Lyra and humors her questions about the balloon and Iorek as best he can.

Roger – Lyra's best friend; he and his family work in the kitchens at Jordan College, but he spends most of his time playing with Lyra. He's utterly devoted to her, though he's a far more cautious child and dislikes playing "kids and Gobblers" or tampering with Scholars' remains in the crypt. Gobblers kidnap Roger at the same time as they kidnap Billy Costa, and Lyra vows to figure out what happened to Roger and rescue him. When they reunite in Bolvanger, Roger shows Lyra that he's still a scrappy Jordan kid by pointing out that they can get into the ceiling and hide. He's Lyra's second-in-command when Lyra orchestrates the children's escape and is, for no reason that Lyra can discern, the one child aside from Lyra that Mrs. Coulter seems intent on recapturing. He joins Lyra in her final journey to Lord Asriel, which ends up being fatal for him: Lord Asriel kills Roger in order to create the burst of energy necessary to open up the passageway to the universe visible through the Aurora. In this way, Roger factors into the prophecy that guides Lyra's life. While Serafina Pekkala suggests that Roger is simply leading Lyra north and to Lord Asriel, his death indicates that the prophecy was referring to him when it said that Lyra must unwittingly lead someone to their death.

Farder Coram – A wise, old gyptian man. While his mind is still very sharp, Farder Coram's body is failing him. He trembles and walks with two canes. The beauty and health of his cat dæmon, Sophonax, represents his mental acuity. As a young man, Farder Coram fell in love with the witch Serafina Pekkala. He still loves her in the novel's present but hasn't seen her for more than 40 years. Lyra recognizes that Farder Coram is still heartbroken over losing her. When Lyra is unable to join many of the gyptian groups preparing for the journey north, she attaches herself to Farder Coram and the two become close friends. Farder Coram mentors Lyra and helps her interpret some of the symbols on the alethiometer, while also making her feel useful and important thanks to her ability to read it. His confidence and his knowledge of the bears means that Farder Coram is able to convince Iorek Byrnison to come with the gyptians in a way that Lyra feels was rude and risky.

Serafina Pekkala – A beautiful witch who, 40 years prior to the start of the novel, fell in love and had a child with Farder Coram. They met when he saved her from an attack by a huge red bird. Their relationship, while strong, came to an end sometime after their son died in an epidemic, when Serafina Pekkala was required to become a clan queen. Despite this, the two have remained in contact to a degree and Serafina Pekkala has sent help to Farder Coram at various points over the years. She comes to his and Lyra's aid when the gyptians head north to rescue children from Bolvanger. In a conversation with the balloonist Lee Scoresby, Serafina Pekkala says that what's happening at Bolvanger is unconscionable and that they're all warriors in the mysterious war that's taking place and which concerns Lyra. She suggests that it's their duty to fight for the good, as represented by Lyra.

John Faa – The king of the gyptians. John Faa is a huge and imposing man, but Lyra discovers quickly that he's very warm and kind. His sense of morality is finely-tuned; he shames gyptians who suggest that they shouldn't rescue non-gyptian children, refuses to give up Lyra to the authorities, and reminds everyone that they have a responsibility to care for Lyra in part because she's Lord Asriel's daughter and Lord Asriel has

advocated for gyptian legal rights at various points. When they discuss the Master's choice to allow Lyra to go to Mrs. Coulter (something he'd been asked not to do), John Faa suggests to Lyra that sometimes, there are no good decisions. However, John Faa always tries to do the right thing, and so aligns himself with a variety of different people and races who all believe in the same vision of the future.

Iofur Raknison – The illegitimate king of the bears. Iofur is even bigger than Iorek, and desperately wants to be a human. This desire (and his related discomfort with his identity as a bear) means that he's susceptible to Mrs. Coulter's flattery and machinations; she orchestrated, through Iofur, the fight between Iorek and another bear that resulted in Iorek killing that bear and thus losing his right to the throne. As king, Iofur upends panserbjørne (armored bear) traditions and builds a marble and granite palace to emulate human palaces. He also wants to build a university. While he's technically successful in building the palace, the fact that it's dirty, malodorous, and covered in bird droppings suggests that his desire to change the culture is ill-fated and not something that makes sense for the bears. In addition to wanting to be human, as represented by having a dæmon, Iofur's greatest wish is to be baptized as a Christian in Geneva. Though Iorek insists that bears can't be tricked, Lyra learns that a bear who doesn't want to be a bear can, in fact, be tricked just like a human. Using this information and the realization that Iofur carries a stuffed doll with him that resembles Mrs. Coulter (the doll is supposed to emulate a dæmon), Lyra tells him that she's Iorek's dæmon and that the only way that he can obtain her is to fight Iorek in single combat and win her from him. Because of Iofur's discomfort with being a bear, he's not comfortable in his beautifully ornate armor, which is more decorative than useful. He ultimately loses the battle with Iorek and dies because of this.

Tony Makarios – The novel's tragic poster child for the horrors of intercision. A poor boy from Oxford, Mrs. Coulter draws him in by promising him hot chocolate. He was selected for intercision after being caught experimenting sexually with one of the girls at Bolvanger and some time after the procedure, Lyra comes across him in a small northern village where the villagers speak of him as though he's a ghost or a malevolent spirit. Separated from his dæmon, Ratter, Tony is stiff, barely responsive, and overcome with grief. He clutches a dried fish in the same way that he might clutch Ratter. Tony dies hours after Lyra brings him back to the gyptian rescue mission.

The Master – The head of Jordan College. He's an old man in his 70s with a raven dæmon. The Master is kind and protective of Lyra, though Lyra struggles to see how true this is when she secretly witnesses the Master try to poison Lord Asriel. He, however, tells the Librarian in private that protecting Lyra from Lord Asriel is extremely important. This is, in part, because the Master is aware of the prophecy concerning Lyra. It appears to pain him that he can't impart much information to Lyra because of the parameters set out in the prophecy.

Dr. Grumman – A scientist who, 18 months before the start of the novel, took an expedition to the North to presumably study Dust and, Lord Asriel believes, the city that's visible through the Aurora. Things went wrong, however: Lord Asriel shows Dr. Grumman's scalped head to the Scholars at Jordan College and implies that either the panserbjørne or the Tartars killed him. Lee Scoresby later suggests that this is false, and that Dr. Grumman is alive—or, at least, wasn't killed by the Tartars, since Dr. Grumman was an "honorary Tartar" and participated in their spiritual rituals.

Ma Costa – Billy and Tony Costa's mother. She's a large and imposing woman known for both walloping naughty children and giving them sweets. Lyra has a healthy fear of Ma Costa—the summer before the novel begins, she tried to steal Ma Costa's narrow boat. Ma Costa, however, doesn't hold grudges; she's happy to house and conceal Lyra after Lyra escapes from Mrs. Coulter. Lyra later learns that this is because Ma Costa nursed her as an infant.

Kaisa – Serafina Pekkala's gray goose dæmon. Witches' dæmons can travel far from their humans, which gives Lyra quite a shock the first time she sees Kaisa. Like Serafina Pekkala, Kaisa is extremely wise. He is vague when he doesn't know information or doesn't want to share his opinions, and believes that the things happening at Bolvanger are evil. He magically helps Lyra free intercised dæmons from their cages during a fire drill and promises to help reunite them with their children.

The Gobblers – The name that laypeople assign to the mysterious entity that steals poor and gyptian children. Among laypeople, the Gobblers are thought of as an urban legend, if a terrifying and real one, and parents use them to threaten children into behaving. Lyra later learns that the Gobblers are real and are actually the General Oblation Board, the organization run by Mrs. Coulter and the Magisterium that kidnaps children, ships them north, and performs intercision on them.

The Palmerian Professor – A professor at Jordan College whose area of expertise seems to be the North. Jotham Santelia, the scholar held by the bears at Svalbard, suggests that the Palmerian Professor is a self-important upstart who actually conducts shoddy research, but this accusation is questionable given Jotham Santelia's compromised mental state. The Palmerian Professor does seem full of himself.

The Golden Monkey – Mrs. Coulter's dæmon; a small golden-colored monkey with luxurious fur. The narrator never gives the monkey's name. Unlike most dæmons, the monkey seems to be able to stray from Mrs. Coulter's side. He reflects Mrs. Coulter's cruel and unfeeling nature when he hurts children's dæmons, and seems simply curious about the results of his actions.

Tony Costa – Billy Costa's older brother. He's a strong young man and is fiercely protective of Lyra. He and his friends rescue Lyra when she runs away from Mrs. Coulter, and he's one of the men who goes north on the rescue expedition. He spends time in bars and pubs, mostly so he can pick up on useful gossip.

Jerry – A sailor on the ship that the gyptians engage to take them to Trollesund. He and Lyra become friends. He assures Lyra that all dæmons have to settle and that it's a normal part of growing up. Jerry says that it's a good thing, as a settled dæmon will tell a person a lot about who they are.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Dr. Martin Lanselius – The consul for the witches in Trollesund. He's a fat man with an expressive face and a bright green serpent dæmon. He shares what he knows about the Gobblers and their activities in the North with Farder Coram and suggests that the gyptians engage Iorek Byrnison.

The Intercessor – A Scholar at Jordan College who, before the start of the novel, took an interest in Lyra's spiritual wellbeing, but eventually gave up on her. He continues to express concern that she doesn't have female or highborn friends.

Adèle Starminster – A reporter who sneaks in at one of Mrs. Coulter's parties and pulls Lyra aside to speak with her privately. She's overcome with fear when Mrs. Coulter catches her, but she seems suspicious about what Mrs. Coulter is doing and specifically, how she treats Lyra.

Billy Costa – A gyptian boy whom the Gobblers kidnap. Prior to his kidnapping, he was one of Lyra's seasonal playmates and rivals. He helps Lyra keep watch and gather information while at Bolvanger and escapes without undergoing intercision.

Benjamin de Ruyter – The head of one of the gyptian families and the man put in charge of conducting spy work. He and his crew are ambushed while trying to infiltrate the Ministry of Theology and he doesn't survive the ordeal.

Sister Clara – A nurse at Bolvanger who, Lyra comes to discover, has undergone intercision as an adult. She's lifeless, blank, and dedicated to her duties, and her white terrier dæmon seems similarly disinterested in the world.

The Librarian – The librarian at Jordan College. He's in league with the Master and agrees that they need to protect Lyra, but he finds the Master's attempt to poison Lord Asriel extremely disturbing.

Jacob Huismans – A young man under Benjamin de Ruyter who survives the ambush at the Ministry of Theology long enough to return to the Fens and tell Farder Coram and Lyra what happened.

Sophonax – Farder Coram's dæmon. She's a larger-than-life, tawny cat with luxurious fur. Her obvious good health indicates that Farder Coram's mind is still sharp, even if his body is old and failing.

Jotham Santelia – A scholar imprisoned at Svalbard. Though he appears mentally unstable when Lyra meets him, he was formerly an expert in the North and a rival of the Palmerian Professor.

Lord Boreal – A scientist and high-level government official who explains what the General Oblation Board is to Lyra. Lord Asriel reveals later that Mrs. Coulter is sexually involved with Lord Boreal.

Søren Eisarson – An old bear counselor who tells Lyra and Iorek about Mrs. Coulter's mysterious hold over Iofur.

Thorold – Lord Asriel's manservant. While he seems relatively loyal to Lord Asriel, he does alert Lyra to Lord Asriel's strange and suspicious disappearance with Roger.

Stelmaria – Lord Asriel's snow leopard dæmon. She's strong, powerful, and imposing.

Hugh Louat – One of Lyra's playmates in Oxford.

Simon Parslow – One of Lyra's playmates in Oxford.

Mrs. Lonsdale – The harsh housekeeper at Jordan College.

The Butler – The butler at Jordan College.

The Steward – The steward at Jordan College.

The Porter – The porter at Jordan College.

Annie – A girl being held at Bolvanger.

Ratter – Tony Makarios's dæmon.

Dr. Rusakov The scientist who first discovered Dust.

TERMS

Dæmon – The term for humans' souls, which in **Lyra**'s world take the form of animals. When humans are children their dæmons can change form, but they settle into a permanent form once their person reaches puberty. They act as a conscience and a moral compass, and are intimately and mysteriously bound to their human.

Gyptian – A group of people in **Lyra**'s world that are modeled off of real-world Roma people. They're transient people who live on narrowboats, and the general populace thinks of them as thieves and liars. While they have the right to free movement in England, they have poor legal standing in most other cases.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

CHILDHOOD, INNOCENCE, AND MATURATION

The Golden Compass follows 11-year-old Lyra as she embarks on a quest to save her best friend, Roger. In Lyra's world, which exists parallel to the reader's world, all humans have dæmons, physical manifestations of a person's soul and conscience that take the form of animals. Because Lyra is still a child, her dæmon, Pan, can change his form at will, but as children reach puberty, their dæmons "settle" into a form that they'll have for the rest of their person's life. This transition from child to adult is one of great interest to the characters in the novel, and as such, Pullman goes to great lengths to draw out the differences between children and adult characters. The Golden Compass proposes, first and foremost, that while childhood may be (to some) an idealized state of innocence and inexperience, it's still absolutely necessary to move through it and become an adult.

Lyra has grown up in the care of the Scholars at Jordan College in Oxford. As an 11-year-old in the care of men who love her but aren't parents in any sense of the word, Lyra is afforded a great deal of freedom to truly be a child. She engages in "wars" with the children from Jordan College, the surrounding colleges, the "townies," and the traveling gyptian children. Importantly, all of this takes place away from the jurisdiction of adults, leaving Lyra free to experiment and learn. She doesn't yet need to focus on the bigger-picture events of adulthood. Lyra's freedom situates her as truly an innocent: though she's entranced by the idea of the north, where her parents supposedly died and where her beloved uncle Lord Asriel (who is actually her father) travels to study, she's unaware of any goings-on that aren't directly connected to her. The novel suggests that while Lyra may be the protagonist, this sense of innocence, selfishness, and a narrow understanding of the world is something unique to all children—and it's this innocence that goes hand in hand with youth that's of special interest to government bodies who wish to study the mechanism by which this innocence disappears during puberty.

While puberty in Lyra's universe presumably still begins with the same onset of adult hormones as it does in the reader's world, certain scientists in Lyra's world have discovered an external way of measuring whether or not puberty has begun: Dust. In the novel, Dust consists of elementary particles that are attracted to humans—but only adult humans. While Lyra is still at Jordan College, she sneakily sits in on a secret presentation in which Lord Asriel shows Scholars photographs developed with a special emulsion that picks up on Dust, in which adult figures are illuminated by Dust while children remain dark and shadowy. The role of Dust is remarkable and of interest to many because, as Lord Asriel explains, Dust is thought to be the physical cause or proof of original sin. In theory, at least, stopping the onset of puberty and the related settling of one's dæmon so someone doesn't attract Dust would stop a person from ever moving beyond innocence to gain experience or, as one nurse puts it, experience "troublesome thoughts"—presumably, sexual thoughts. Given this state of affairs, children exist in a very vulnerable state. Because of their innocence they know little about the danger they face from the organization that kidnaps them, ships them north, and performs experiments on them by severing the connection between their bodies and their dæmons, a procedure known as intercision. Because of their status as children, they're also in a relatively powerless position to fight back when they do get wind of what's happening.

Despite the interest in separating humans from their dæmons, the result of the experiments, both on adults and children, paint a chilling picture of the consequences of attempting to suspend a person in a state of pre-pubescent innocence. At Bolvanger, the northern laboratory that carries out these experiments, Lyra learns that the adult nurses there have undergone intercision. Those nurses appear to be little more than shells of humans, while their dæmons are similarly lifeless and incurious. Children who undergo intercision, meanwhile, suffer physically and emotionally, and if they don't die of shock during the procedure, they all die an emotionally and physically painful death within a few weeks. All of this suggests that attempts to preserve childhood innocence are futile and cruel—rather, the novel suggests people should be allowed to experience all that life has to offer in adulthood, both the good and the bad.

Once all of this becomes clear to Lyra and she learns how cruel and unfeeling Lord Asriel is (he heartlessly performs intercision on Roger in the name of his studies into Dust, killing Roger), Lyra and Pan begin to reevaluate some of their earlier, childish desires to never grow up, and come to the radical conclusion that Dust might not be a bad thing after all. This conclusion represents, first and foremost, the understanding that as uncomfortable as it may be for children to mature, doing so is absolutely necessary and not a bad thing. Indeed, Lyra's burgeoning emotional and intellectual maturity, even if she doesn't yet attract Dust, is exactly what enables her to escape Bolvanger and intercision herself, and it helps her form a more nuanced view of the adults around her in which she understands that she can't trust them at their word. With this, Lyra and Pan move forward into a parallel world that contains the source of Dust, as well as progress further toward emotional and physical maturity. In doing so, Lyra fully accepts the necessity of growing up. This progression suggests that, while adults may idealize childhood and innocence, remaining innocent is unfulfilling and ultimately robs a person of any ability to think critically, come to conclusions, and positively change the world.

HUMANITY, IDENTITY, AND THE SOUL

The Golden Compass is extremely concerned with what it means to be alive and what it means to have

a soul. Within the world of the novel, a dæmon is a physical manifestation of a person's soul, while other creatures like animals don't have dæmons and other races, such as the bears, state that their souls are contained in their armor. Given the vast range of options that Lyra sees when it comes to manifestations of a being's soul, she ultimately comes to the conclusion that being alive and having a soul are states that are unique to every being. Losing one's soul, no matter how or why, is universally devastating.

The novel first goes to great lengths to show how important dæmons (and the souls they represent) are to humans, as well as how intrinsic dæmons are to a person's identity. It's possible, for instance, to tell a lot about what kind of a person someone is by the form their dæmon settles in in adulthood. Most servants' dæmons take the form of dogs, suggesting an obedient and yielding nature, while all witches' dæmons are birds, which reflects the free and mobile lifestyle that the witches lead. Lord Asriel's dæmon is a snow leopard, which reflects his power as well as the danger he poses. Children's dæmons, which can change shape, similarly reflect their person's mood or needs at any given time. Pan spends much of his time as an ermine or a wild cat, but turns into a bird or bat in order to fly and help Lyra navigate dark city streets, a mean polecat to defend her, or a moth when they want to blend in and hide their emotions. Dæmons are also tasked with comforting and protecting their humans, as well as acting as an external conscience and a constant companion. Lyra knows that as long as she has Pan, she'll never be truly alone, and he'll always be there to guide her in the direction of doing the right thing. Dæmons, then, function as an external display of emotions and personality, and are essential to identifying an individual as human. A person without a dæmon is, to Lyra and those in her world, horrifying, repulsive, and fundamentally different.

This is why, when Lyra first comes face to face with the bear Iorek Byrnison, she's simultaneously curious and repulsed: bears don't have dæmons, and Lyra believes that Iorek must be lonely and deeply different from humans because of his lack of a dæmon. Lyra soon learns, however, that while she's correct that Iorek is fundamentally different from humans, being a bear, it's overly simplistic to tie this difference to his lack of a dæmon. Instead, what makes Iorek unsettling to Lyra when they first meet is that Iorek doesn't possess his armor (which houses bears' souls in the same way that dæmons house humans' souls), which makes him seem soulless and like less of a bear. Returning Iorek's armor to him immediately makes him more tractable and kinder, and in Lyra's eyes, more whole. This suggests that what makes a human a human, or a bear a bear, isn't that they have a dæmon: it's that they have a soul and a conscience that helps them be who they're supposed to be, whatever form that may take. This is why Lyra is ultimately able to trick Iofur Raknison, the illegitimate king of the bears, and help install Iorek on the throne: Iorek makes it clear that it's not in a bear's nature to be able to be tricked, but because Iofur is fixated on becoming a human by acquiring a dæmon, he's susceptible to the follies of humanity and forfeits the elements of being a bear that would otherwise help him see through such a trick.

Seeing Iorek, Iofur, and the horrific experiments taking place at Bolvanger make it clear to Lyra that no matter what, a being must have a soul in order to properly live. Being without a soul not only keeps a person from being subject to original sin, the goal of the scientists at Bolvanger; it also makes them less than human. It's disturbing for Lyra and the gyptians when Lyra returns from a nearby village with Tony Makarios, a child whose dæmon was cut from him in a process known as intercision. They regard him "like someone without a face, or with their ribs laid open and their heart torn out: something unnatural and uncanny that belonged to the world of nightgasts, not the waking world of sense." Later, at Bolvanger, Lyra finds the nurses who underwent intercision as adults to be nearly as horrifying: they're mindless shells and their dæmons are disinterested and obedient, rather than dynamic and observant. All of this culminates in Lyra's final understanding that no matter who or what a being is, their soul and all that comes with it—from original sin and curiosity, to a sense of purpose—is what makes a being a bear, a human, or a witch. A being's soul, the novel suggests, is what makes them who they are and should be protected at all costs.

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND CONTROL

The Golden Compass introduces the reader to a world in which the Magisterium—a version of the Catholic Church—rules nearly everything. This sets up one of the novel's primary questions as being what role the church should have over society. In Lyra's case, this question is explored by simply discovering how much of the world the church actually controls. *The Golden Compass* situates the Magisterium as a fundamentally corrupt organization that, rather than existing to care for the spiritual wellbeing of people, instead dedicates itself to controlling the flow of ideas and information that could eventually lead people to question the legitimacy of the Magisterium's authority. Thus, the novel questions the general role of religion in society and critiques the undue level of control it can exert over people's lives.

Pullman goes to great lengths to illustrate how the fictional Magisterium will do almost anything to ensure that it gains and maintains power. Throughout the novel, Lyra pieces together seemingly disconnected bits of information—such as the existence of the child-stealing Gobblers, the existence of Dust, and Mrs. Coulter's role as the head of the General Oblation Board—to come to a more complete understanding of the extent of the Magisterium's reach. Lyra learns that the Magisterium has, over the years, created a number of

governing bodies and organizations to fulfill all manner of duties, and whenever one of those bodies steps out of line or does something that the Magisterium doesn't like, they can easily cut funding, revoke licenses, and generally act as though they were never involved in the first place. This allows the Magisterium to experiment with a variety of things with few consequences, including their current experiments with the General Oblation Board. Mrs. Coulter and the General Oblation Board are behind Bolvanger, the scientific laboratory in the north, that conducts research into intercision—cutting humans from their dæmons—as a means of keeping children from ever having to experience the full extent of original sin. This is, in other words, an attempt to create a more passive, complacent population. Humans' ability to choose between right and wrong is inherent to original sin, so within the world of the novel, it seems that someone else gets to make those choices for Intercised adults.

The General Oblation Board and its aims are notable especially because it targets the most vulnerable people in Lyra's world—poor people and the gyptians (transient people who live on boats and are modeled after Roma people). While there would certainly be outrage if the General Oblation Board were to experiment on the children of wealthy or even middle-class people, there's little pushback when gyptian and poor children start disappearing and never return. Further, because the gyptians and the poor have little standing in society, there's no real way for them to investigate these disappearances or even discover that it's the General Oblation Board that's taking their children in the first place. This demonstrates how the Magisterium runs on wealth and prestige, while abusing and exploiting vulnerable groups to come up with new ways to expand its reach even further.

The Magisterium also plays a major role in censoring information, especially information that stands to upset its authority. This is most apparent as Lyra gradually learns about Dust, an elementary particle that's believed to be both proof of and the cause of original sin. When the scientist Dr. Rusakov discovered Dust, the Magisterium put him on trial and performed an exorcism. When it became clear that Dust was real, they ultimately censored his work. While the Magisterium eventually comes around to weaponizing Dust and studying it through the General Oblation Board (its research concerns figuring out if Dust and original sin don't stick to children who are separated from their dæmons), Dust is still a controversial subject. This is why the Magisterium orchestrates Lord Asriel's imprisonment by the bears in the north: he wants to take the research further and actually destroy the source of Dust. Destroying Dust and its source would, importantly, render the Magisterium unnecessary for spiritual reasons—the church exists to mediate a person's relationship to the divine and guide them toward mitigating as many of the effects of original sin as possible. Without Dust, Lord Asriel suggests, humans would once again be as Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden: perfect, innocent, and without the need of the Magisterium's mediation. This result would be understandably terrifying for an organization that seeks to obtain and retain as much influence as possible.

Pullman himself has been open about his distaste for Christianity and organized religion. As such, it's easy to read the Magisterium as a fictionalized representation of the real-life Catholic Church and the ways in which, throughout history, the church has discouraged science and criticism that challenges church doctrine. Specifically, Lyra's final conclusion—that Dust isn't a bad thing; rather, it *must* be good and is essentially what makes humans human—is a wildly heretical idea, both to the fictional Magisterium and to most Christian teachings in the real world. By positioning Lyra in a place where she makes these connections and starts to question the Magisterium, Pullman encourages readers to follow along with a similar thought experiment, thereby questioning religious teachings and the power of religious authorities as a whole.

TRUTH, LIES, AND MORALITY

Lyra, the heroine of the novel, is, without a question, a regular and skilled liar. She lies about everything, from whether she's been on the Jordan College roof or not to eventually orchestrating the duel between Iorek and Iofur by telling Iofur that she's Iorek's dæmon. Initially, the novel treats Lyra's penchant for lying as a normal part of being a child, but as the novel progresses, it begins to suggest that lying is something to take seriously, especially if one wants to use lies to extract the truth or do the right thing. In this way, *The Golden Compass* portrays a person's lies and the intentions behind them as a useful way to gauge their relative morality.

When Lyra's story begins, her lies and deceits seem to have little consequence—the worst that happens is that she gets out of her sporadic and boring lessons, or she gets in trouble. This all begins to change when she witnesses something that shocks her to her core: she sees the Master of Jordan College, a man whom she thought was good, poison a decanter of wine intended for Lord Asriel. At this point, Lyra is introduced to the fact that she's not the only liar at Jordan College or indeed, in the world: other people are also busy lying and deceiving others as they go about their business and attempt to achieve their goals. Unfortunately for Lyra, the fact that she tips off Lord Asriel and he doesn't drink the wine sets off a series of events that ultimately culminates in discovering that Lord Asriel is one of the worst offenders when it comes to lying. Similarly, in a private meeting with another Scholar that takes place soon after Lyra witnesses the assassination attempt, the Master admits that he was trying to save Lyra from Lord Asriel and preserve her childhood and innocence for a while longer.

While Lyra is never privy to this information, it allows the reader to see early on that there's more to one's actions than might initially meet the eye—a bad or deceitful act may actually be something good in the long run.

Lyra's identity as a liar becomes more complicated in the following weeks when, early in the morning before Lyra leaves Jordan College to live with Mrs. Coulter, a wealthy and glamorous woman, the Master gives Lyra an alethiometer—the titular golden compass which, if someone knows how to read it, will answer any question truthfully. For most people—that is, adults—learning to read the alethiometer takes years of study and the help of one of only a few reference books on the subject. Once Lyra figures out how the alethiometer is supposed to work, however, she's able to teach herself to read it without much help; she only occasionally asks clarifying questions about what the pictures on the compass face are. With this, the novel suggests that just as lying and pushing the limits as Lyra does are normal aspects of childhood, so too is the ability to effectively and intuitively ascertain the truth. Iorek confirms this when he suggests that Lyra's ability to read the alethiometer is likely similar to bears' innate ability to recognize deceit and trickery, a skill that humans used to have but have long since forgotten. This suggests that Lyra might lose the ability to read the alethiometer as she moves toward adulthood and thereby becomes what the novel suggests is more human.

With the help of the alethiometer, Lyra is able to channel her lies to do what she believes is the right thing and through doing so, develops a firmer and more nuanced view of what constitutes morality, good, and evil. The fact that it takes the combination of truth and deceit to do this suggests that lies aren't all bad—instead, intention and a sense of what's right or wrong on a grander scale is what matters. Importantly, however, the one thing that Lyra never questions—Lord Asriel's goodness and trustworthiness—leaves her susceptible to his manipulations and ultimately, ends in Lyra unwittingly leading her best friend, Roger, to his death at Lord Asriel's hands. Even in the hours before Lord Asriel moves to kill Roger, Lyra seems aware that he's nor a moral or trustworthy person. She feels hurt and betrayed that he's spent her whole life lying to her about being her uncle rather than her father, and suggests that a good, moral, truthful father would've shared this information and thanked her for bringing him the alethiometer, which Lyra believes she was supposed to do.

Following Lyra's betrayal of Roger and Lord Asriel's betrayal of Lyra, Lyra and Pan vow to do what they can to protect other children from dying like Roger did. Importantly, they decide to go it alone with only the help of the alethiometer. With this, the novel suggests that as Lyra moves on, it's important that she can both successfully lie and gain access to the truth. But more important than either of those things is learning how to ask the right questions—something that the novel suggests is the only way to truly understand the morality of one's actions.

DESTINY VS. FREE WILL

Though Lyra, the protagonist of the novel, doesn't know it, her life is guided by fate. Lyra's existence was foretold in a prophecy, which says that she's destined to both save the world and unwittingly lead someone else to their sacrifice. An important part of the prophecy, however, is the fact that Lyra must not know that she's destined to do this—she must believe that she's acting of her own free will, or she's going to fail. With this, *The Golden Compass* suggests that while there may be an element of destiny at work in its world, there's still room for individual interpretation—and one's personal thoughts on destiny or free will are just as important, if not more important, than what one's destiny actually is.

The existence of the prophecy about Lyra is corroborated by a number of sources, from the Master at Jordan College to the witch Serafina Pekkala. They both state the basic facts of the prophecy—that Lyra must lead someone to their death and not know she's doing it—which suggests that within the world of the novel, the existence of destiny is something that's generally accepted by a variety of different groups. Both try, in their own ways, to help Lyra fulfill her destiny: the Master by giving Lyra the alethiometer, and Serafina by carrying Lyra and Roger away from Bolvanger and to Lord Asriel. The Master ensures that Lyra is going to head for Lord Asriel (who will kill Roger) by, possibly unwittingly, making it seem as though Lyra is supposed to take Lord Asriel the alethiometer. This makes it clear that it's certainly possible for someone to purposefully help destiny along. Given the way that the novel constructs the prophecy (in which Lyra *could* save the world but, if she knows what she's doing, will fail), this becomes extremely important—it's not as though the prophecy will come to fruition regardless of what a person does; there's still a significant element of choice involved that will guide which version of the prophecy will come to pass.

For Lyra, the alethiometer helps her comes to terms with the fact that destiny (and, to a degree, reading the future) exist in her world—and importantly, that it's her responsibility to read and listen. While she's initially confused when the alethiometer suggests that a gyptian man is in trouble, it makes sense not long after when Lyra and the gyptian elder Farder Coram receive word that the gyptian man in question died. Through this, Lyra learns that she must trust the alethiometer and if it tells her to do something, she has no choice but to listen to it. Because of this, Lyra insists on making a journey to a nearby town where a "ghost" is causing problems for the townsfolk. The alethiometer tells her that she must deal with the ghost and when the ghost turns out to be Tony Makarios, a child who suffered intercision, Lyra understands that she had to make the journey in order to gather valuable information about what

exactly happens at Bolvanger and why she must stop it. This instance, however, also makes the case that it's often only in retrospect that destiny makes sense, suggesting that it's impossible to truly understand how destiny functions until much later.

Meanwhile, the balloonist Lee Scoresby and Serafina Pekkala also discuss the ethics involved in destiny. Scoresby is uninterested in destiny and wishes to participate in life and the war to come of his own volition and, moreover, suggests that it's unethical to make Lyra responsible for the fate of all humanity without her consent. Serafina, however, suggests that there's more to destiny and this particular prophecy than just Lyra: they all have the choice of which side with which to align themselves, and which version of the prophecy they'll work to see come true. With this, Serafina makes it clear that, even within the framework of destiny that the novel sets out, there's still plenty of room to exercise free will—it will just be in the service of destiny one way or another.

The Golden Compass doesn't fully tie up its exploration of destiny and free will, which continues through the next two books in the series. But it does leave Lyra and the reader with the sense that even within a universe where destiny plays a major role, it's still important to exercise one's free will and to recognize that free will isn't actually opposed to destiny at all. What's set up initially as a dichotomy is, in actuality, two halves of a worldview that only makes sense when one takes time, space, and knowledge of prophecy into account.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in blue text throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE ALETHIOMETER

The alethiometer—the titular golden compass—represents children's unique ability to discern truth. The Alethiometer is a gold instrument with pictures and three needles that, if one knows how to read it, will answer any question truthfully. The fact that Lyra can read the alethiometer without study (Farder Coram notes that it takes adults years and a specific reference guide to learn to read it) suggests that given the way the novel conceptualizes childhood and innocence, the ability to ascertain the truth like this is something unique to children. In this way, the alethiometer more broadly makes the point that because of their innocent nature, children can, when given the correct tools, be the least biased and most effective judges of morality or truth.

DUST

Within the world of the novel, Dust is an elementary particle that collects around adult humans beginning at the onset of puberty, as a person's dæmon begins to settle. It is a physical embodiment of adults' capacity for individual choice as they lose their childhood innocence and gain knowledge of the world—whether those choices are good or evil. Because of this, the Magisterium decides that Dust is both proof of and the reason for original sin, or the ability to make choices and acquire knowledge (and also is the root of death, disease, and evil). Turning original sin into a physical thing that can be studied, manipulated, and blamed for the world's evils magnifies the Magisterium's need for power, as it means that there's a way to create a population that's easier to control: stopping Dust from settling, and original sin from taking hold, through intercision.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Random House edition of *The Golden Compass* published in 1995.

Chapter One Quotes

"I didn't have anything in mind, and well you know it," she snapped quietly. "But now I've seen what the Master did, I haven't got any choice. You're supposed to know about conscience, aren't you? How can I just go and sit in the library or somewhere and twiddle my thumbs, knowing what's going to happen? I don't intend to do *that*, I promise you."

Related Characters: Lyra (speaker), Pan, Lord Asriel, The Master

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

Once Lyra and Pan find themselves stuck in the Retiring Room and witness the Master poison wine intended for Lord Asriel, Lyra insists that they have a responsibility to save Lord Asriel. The way that Lyra chastises Pan sheds light on the role that a dæmon is supposed to play for people in Lyra's world. As her dæmon, he's supposed to function as her conscience and, under most circumstances, she'd expect her conscience to take issue with poisoning someone. However, the fact that Pan positions himself as opposing Lyra in this situation suggests that due to their age, Pan is as much Lyra's conscience as a way for her to experiment with

where her loyalties and her morality must lie. Their dissonance suggests that they're still in a developmental stage and, once they've fully come of age, they might be more on the same page about things like this.

Chapter Two Quotes

❝ Ever since Pope John Calvin had moved the seat of the Papacy to Geneva and set up the Consistorial Court of Discipline, the Church's power over every aspect of life had been absolute. The Papacy itself had been abolished after Calvin's death, and a tangle of courts, colleges, and councils, collectively known as the Magisterium, had grown up in its place.

Related Characters: The Master, The Librarian

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Following his failed assassination attempt of Lord Asriel, the Master and the Librarian drink and discuss the trouble brewing in the world. The Librarian here is considering how the Magisterium came to power. It's telling that he believes that the Magisterium's control is absolute, as this suggests that Lyra's world is one that's run by an organization that has little to push back on its power. The fact that it has so many entities under its jurisdiction also means that its power can probably be detected in every corner of the world, since it appears easy enough to install a council or a court someplace and exert control in this way. This begins to flesh out Lyra's real adversary and positions the novel as a whole as one that challenges organized religion like this first and foremost.

It's also interesting to note that the last pope mentioned here—before the rise of the Magisterium—is named John Calvin. Historically, John Calvin was an early Protestant reformer who wholeheartedly rejected the Catholic Church. Thus this again shows Pullman using and changing elements from history and reality to create his alternate universe.

❝ "Yes. Lyra has a part to play in all this, and a major one. The irony is that she must do it all without realizing what she's doing. She can be helped, though, and if my plan with the Tokay had succeeded, she would have been safe for a little longer."

Related Characters: The Master (speaker), Lord Asriel, The Librarian

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

The Master tells the Librarian about the prophecy concerning Lyra. Structurally, telling the reader that Lyra's life has been dictated by prophecy first establishes that destiny exists in this world, and then it positions the reader in a state of not fully following Lyra on her journey of discovery while withholding other pertinent information. In this sense, the reader assumes a sort of adolescence, just like Lyra: they know some things about how her world works before she does, and in that way get to exist like the Master and the Librarian, while not knowing about the panserbjørne, for example, means that the reader must discover things alongside Lyra.

Knowing that destiny is guiding Lyra also allows the reader to understand that even when events don't make total sense to Lyra, they likely do make sense in terms of the prophecy. The reader, in other words, may feel just as uneasy as Lyra does about bad things that are going to happen, but unlike Lyra, they know that they're supposed to happen. This creates tension, as it suggests that destiny isn't always comfortable or sensible.

Chapter Three Quotes

❝ Lyra was frightened. No one worried about a child gone missing for a few hours, certainly not a gyptian: in the tight-knit gyptian boat world, all children were precious and extravagantly loved, and a mother knew that if a child was out of sight, it wouldn't be far from someone else's who would protect it instinctively.

Related Characters: Lyra, Ma Costa, The Gobblers, Billy Costa

Related Themes:

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

Following Billy Costa's disappearance, Ma Costa is unusually anxious and upset. This tips Lyra off to the fact that there's something sinister going on. The way that the

narrator describes the gyptian people explains in part why the General Oblation Board (the Gobblers) would target them: in general, they're used to their children running free and not always being kept close to their parents. This makes the gyptian children vulnerable and gyptian parents vulnerable as well, as the Gobblers certainly have far more time to make off with a child than they might if the child were expected to spend time closer to home or under closer supervision. When Lyra begins to make these connections and realize that the Gobblers are real, it shows how these horrible things happening in her world gradually become personal. As they do so, Lyra has information that allows her to move forward toward maturity and adulthood.

Chapter Four Quotes

The Master sighed. In his black suit and black tie he looked as much like his dæmon as anyone could, and suddenly Lyra thought that one day, quite soon, he would be buried in the crypt under the oratory, and an artist would engrave a picture of his dæmon on the brass plate for his coffin, and her name would share the space with his.

Related Characters: Lyra, The Master

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

When the Master speaks to Lyra before she leaves with Mrs. Coulter, Lyra flashes on the fact that the Master is old and soon will die. This shows that Lyra is starting to mature, come of age, and think more critically about the people around her—and importantly, recognize that the adults in her life are mortal and won't always be there for her. This realization more broadly fits in with the way that, throughout the novel, Lyra gradually sees bits and pieces of wider politics become personal and, as this happens, she starts to figure out how she fits into the wider world. Being aware of the Master's mortality does this even more than other moments of maturity, as it suggests that she's starting to understand that she won't always have adults around to protect her—at some point, she'll become the adult.

Mrs. Coulter came into the bathroom to wash Lyra's hair, and she didn't rub and scrape like Mrs. Lonsdale either. She was gentle. Pantalaimon watched with powerful curiosity until Mrs. Coulter looked at him, and he knew what she meant and turned away, averting his eyes modestly from these feminine mysteries as the golden monkey was doing. He had never had to look away from Lyra before.

Related Characters: Lyra, Mrs. Coulter, Pan, The Golden Monkey, Mrs. Lonsdale

Related Themes:

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

When Mrs. Coulter washes Lyra's hair, she makes Pan look away from Lyra's body in the bath. The simple fact that Mrs. Coulter sees fit to force this issue makes it clear that Lyra is quickly approaching puberty and that her body will soon begin to change. Forcing Pan to look away, however, also speaks to the idea that part of growing up and becoming adult means experiencing shame surrounding one's body, something that the novel later suggests is the work of original sin. Forcing this kind of shame and modesty on Lyra at this point, before she's totally ready to feel adult and assert this kind of separation from Pan herself (or not), shows that Mrs. Coulter might want a child, but she also wants Lyra to grow up and join her in her world in a way that Mrs. Coulter sees fit.

Chapter Seven Quotes

Indeed, Tony heard from gossip in pubs along the way that the police were making raids on houses and farms and building yards and factories without any explanation, though there was a rumor that they were searching for a missing girl. And that in itself was odd, considering all the kids that had gone missing without being looked for.

Related Characters: Lyra, Ma Costa, Tony Costa

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

As Lyra travels to the fens with the gyptians, Tony Costa discovers that the Oblation Board and the police are searching for Lyra—though they haven't bothered to search for any other children reported missing. This makes it clear

that the Oblation Board and the Gobblers are targeting vulnerable children that society sees as disposable. Someone like Lyra, however—who, aside from being connected to Mrs. Coulter herself, is highborn in general—is seen as far more valuable and therefore, worthy of resources in a way that the other children aren't. With this, the novel shows how the Magisterium more broadly gains power by targeting the most vulnerable members of society and without caring about how unethical it is for them to do this.

"And the Church in recent times, Lyra, it's been getting more commanding. There's councils for this and councils for that; there's talk of reviving the Office of Inquisition, God forbid. And the Master has to tread warily between all these powers. He has to keep Jordan College on the right side of the Church, or it won't survive."

Related Characters: John Faa (speaker), Lyra, Farder Coram, The Master

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

During a conversation with Lyra, John Faa explains the tight spot that the Master must be in, given how the Magisterium behaves and the Master's role at Jordan College. This makes it clear to Lyra and to the reader how dangerous the political climate is at this time, and how far-reaching the Magisterium's power is (the "Office of Inquisition" is presumably the equivalent of the Spanish Inquisition in our world, a dark and tyrannical time in the Church's history). The Master found himself possibly in danger by denying Mrs. Coulter Lyra, as doing that would mean going against the Oblation Board and, eventually, the Magisterium itself.

Given that the reader is aware of the prophecy concerning Lyra, it makes more sense that the Master let Lyra go—the Master did imply that Lyra was going to have to go north in order to fulfill it. The fact that John Faa is stuck trying to figure this out reminds the reader that when a person is in the thick of it, destiny doesn't always make sense—it only seems clear to an outside observer with all the information, like the reader, or to someone after the fact.

Chapter Ten Quotes

He had to stay close to the ship, of course, for he could never go far from her; but she sensed his desire to speed as far and as fast as he could, for pure exhilaration. She shared his pleasure, but for her it wasn't simple pleasure, for there was pain and fear in it too. Suppose he loved being a dolphin more than he loved being with her on land? What would she do then?

Related Characters: Lyra, Pan, Jerry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 166

Explanation and Analysis

On the ship headed to Trollesund, Pan experiments with taking a dolphin form, which both exhilarates and worries Lyra. Some of Lyra's fear is that she might grow up to be someone she's not sure she wants to be—specifically in this case, someone who must spend all her time on the water. The simple fact that Lyra never seems to share her fears with Pan about this indicates that there might be more separation between human and dæmon than the reader had previously been led to believe, and it also suggests that Lyra doesn't have much control over what form Pan will ultimately take. Some of her fear about not having control over this is, again, anxiety about who she's going to be, but in giving in to this anxiety, she also ignores the fact that she does have some control. Lyra is a driven, perceptive, and outgoing person who's drawn to the north—which means that Pan will reflect that, and being a dolphin probably isn't what he's going to settle on.

"Anyway, there's compensations for a settled form."

"What are they?"

"Knowing what kind of person you are. Take old Belisaria. She's a seagull, and that means I'm kind of a seagull too. I'm not grand and splendid nor beautiful, but I'm a tough old thing and I can survive anywhere and always find a bit of food and company. That's worth knowing, that is. And when your dæmon settles, you'll know the sort of person you are."

Related Characters: Lyra, Jerry (speaker), Pan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 167

Explanation and Analysis

When Jerry the sailor notices that Lyra seems worried that Pan is experimenting with being a dolphin, he kindly gives her a pep talk and assures her that having a settled dæmon isn't a bad thing. As Jerry tells it, dæmons function as much as a person's conscience for the individual in question as they do as a window into the soul for others. This shows the reader that as they evaluate characters, it's important to look at their dæmons and the kind of qualities or lifestyle suggested by what a person's dæmon is.

Importantly, Jerry makes it clear that as far as he's concerned, gaining this knowledge about oneself and formulating a set identity is important and worth giving up childhood for. In this sense, Jerry positions himself opposite Mrs. Coulter and the Oblation Board, which wish to stop people in a state of prepubescent innocence—as far as Jerry is concerned, this knowledge and experience is what makes people human and is the reason they are who they are.

❝ Lyra's heart was thumping hard, because something in the bear's presence made her feel close to coldness, danger, brutal power, but a power controlled by intelligence; and not a human intelligence, nothing like a human, because of course bears had no dæmons. The strange hulking presence gnawing its meat was like nothing she had ever imagined, and she felt a profound admiration and pity for the lonely creature.

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Pan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 179-80

Explanation and Analysis

When Lyra first meets Iorek, she finds him disturbing mostly because he's not human and doesn't have a dæmon. While Lyra isn't wrong, per se, that Iorek isn't human—he isn't—she's partly wrong about what makes him so different and scary. Though she doesn't know it yet, Iorek doesn't possess his armor at this point, which contains his soul. With this knowledge, it's easy to see that Iorek simply looks cold and soulless to her.

Lyra's fixation on the fact that Iorek doesn't have a dæmon speaks to her youth and innocence, as well as her identity as a human. She hasn't yet had to grapple with the fact that there are other beings in her world that exist in very different ways than she does, and that a huge part of that difference is the way that those beings interact with their souls. By learning about how different people tackle the idea of having a soul, Lyra moves gradually closer to maturity.

Chapter Eleven Quotes

❝ She felt angry and miserable. His badger claws dug into the earth and he walked forward. It was such a strange tormenting feeling when your dæmon was pulling at the link between you; part physical pain deep in the chest, part intense sadness and love. And she knew it was the same for him. Everyone tested it when they were growing up: Seeing how far they could pull apart, coming back with intense relief.

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Pan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

When Lyra refuses to approach Iorek, Pan decides to force the issue by trying to pull as far away from Lyra as he can, something that causes them both physical pain. His choice to pull her is a physical representation of the struggle that many people in the real world go through as they attempt to override emotions, instincts, or desires in order to do what they want to do or know they need to do. By suggesting that this is a normal part of being a child in Lyra's world, the book implies that doing this work means that an adult comes to a more complete idea of what they should do—and they don't have to go through so much pain when they must inevitably fight with themselves about something.

❝ "My armor is made of sky iron, made for me. A bear's armor is his soul, just as your dæmon is your soul. You might as well take *him* away"—indicating Pantalaimon—"and replace him with a doll full of sawdust. That is the difference."

Related Characters: Iorek Byrnison (speaker), Lyra, Pan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 196-97

Explanation and Analysis

When Lyra approaches Iorek and asks why he doesn't make himself more armor, he explains the importance of creating armor out of sky iron (metal from a meteorite) and the role that armor plays in the bears' conception of self. By putting this information in terms of dæmons, Iorek frames things in

a format that Lyra can understand—while she might not actually know what it's like to not have a dæmon, she can guess. This allows her to empathize with Iorek and begin to see that he only seems so strange to her because he doesn't have his soul with him, not because he doesn't have a dæmon. As Lyra comes to this understanding, she simultaneously becomes more accepting of individuals who are different, something that begins to push her towards maturity.

Chapter Twelve Quotes

"Because, Iorek, listen: I got this symbol reader that tells me things, you see, and it's told me that there's something important I got to do over in that village, and Lord Faa won't let me go there. He just wants to get on quick, and I know that's important too. But unless I go and find out what it is, we might not know what the Gobblers are really doing."

Related Characters: Lyra (speaker), Iorek Byrnison, Tony Makarios, The Gobblers

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

Following John Faa's disinterest in the "ghost" mentioned by the alethiometer, Lyra calls on Iorek and explains why she feels she has to go check it out. Remember that prior to this moment, Lyra has had several experiences in which her inability to either interpret the alethiometer or her unwillingness to take what it says seriously has resulted in tragedy of some sort. Because of this, Lyra is starting to learn that she has a responsibility to listen when the alethiometer starts to tell her something. Doing this also means that Lyra is following her destiny, though she still doesn't know that that's what happening.

Chapter Thirteen Quotes

Her first impulse was to turn and run, or to be sick. A human being with no dæmon was like someone without a face, or with their ribs laid open and their heart torn out: something unnatural and uncanny that belonged to the world of night-ghasts, not the waking world of sense.

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Pan, Tony Makarios, Ratter

Related Themes:

Page Number: 214

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator describes Lyra's reaction to finding Tony Makarios, a boy who underwent intercision and so doesn't have a dæmon. The physicality of Lyra's reaction suggests that what the Oblation Board is doing is something wholly evil and unnatural—it's something that, within the logic of this world, simply doesn't compute or is the stuff of nightmares. This should tell Lyra that the Magisterium more broadly is attempting to fundamentally change the population and how it functions so that it can better control people.

Part of Lyra's disgust also comes from the fact that she knows that cutting people's dæmons away isn't just disgusting; it's also wrong on a moral sense. She's already seen Iorek Byrnison without his armor and without his soul; seeing Tony without a dæmon is much the same thing, but it suggests that a child without a soul is something even more horrific than an adult bear without a soul. All of this impresses upon Lyra in concrete terms that a person's soul is worth protecting at all costs.

"How do you *do* that?"

"By not being human," he said. "That's why you could never trick a bear. We see tricks and deceit as plain as arms and legs. We can see in a way humans have forgotten. But you know about this; you can understand the symbol reader."

"That en't the same, is it?" [...]

"It is the same," he said. "Adults can't read it, as I understand. As I am to human fighters, so you are to adults with the symbol reader."

"Yes, I suppose," she said, puzzled and unwilling. "Does that mean I'll forget how to do it when I grow up?"

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 226

Explanation and Analysis

Iorek invites Lyra to fence with him so he can show her how it's impossible to trick bears, a way of understanding that Iorek suggests is akin to the way that Lyra can read the alethiometer when adults can't. All of this starts to point to the idea that within the world of the novel, children aren't entirely human in a similar way that bears aren't human—there's something about them that makes them fundamentally different. The novel suggests that in Lyra's case especially, what differentiates her from adults is that she has an uncanny knack for ascertaining the truth with the alethiometer. This implies that children in general are better able to see the truth and differentiate right from wrong; their instincts are still pure, while adult instincts, Iorek suggests, have been muddied and suppressed to the point where adults struggle more to make moral choices.

Chapter Fifteen Quotes

"We dunno," said Annie. "Just something from space. Not real dust. If you en't got any Dust, that's good. But everyone gets Dust in the end."

Related Characters: Annie (speaker), Lyra, The Gobblers

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 246

Explanation and Analysis

At Bolvanger, a girl named Annie tells Lyra that the doctors are looking for Dust—and that while many of the children don't have Dust, they all will at some point. Though Annie, Lyra, and their companions don't know what Dust is yet, the book thus far has hinted that it is a manifestation of original sin and the onset of puberty, Annie's statement makes much more sense: every child will enter puberty and begin to grow up, something that, in this world, coincides with attracting Dust. This suggests that growing up itself is inevitable and it's not something that people can truly or effectively stop. The fact that the children know so little about what's happening to them speaks to how vulnerable they are: without adult status and the ability to press for more information, they can't effectively advocate for themselves.

Chapter Sixteen Quotes

"I think he's got an entirely different idea of the nature of Dust. That's the point. It's profoundly heretical, you see, and the Consistorial Court of Discipline can't allow any other interpretation than the authorized one. And besides, he wants to experiment—"

"To experiment? With Dust?"

Related Characters: The Gobblers (speaker), Lyra, Lord Asriel

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 274

Explanation and Analysis

From the ceiling, Lyra listens as several Bolvanger doctors discuss what Lord Asriel is doing and why the Magisterium is so afraid of him. When the doctor mentions that the Consistorial Court of Discipline can't allow anyone to spread ideas that don't align with the "authorized" interpretation, it drives home the fact that in this world, the Magisterium exists to police the flow of ideas so that nothing that challenges its authority ever comes to light. The very fact that the doctors are talking about Lord Asriel's research suggests that the Magisterium hasn't been particularly successful in this endeavor, even if the Magisterium is planning to take Lord Asriel out in the near future. Its power, in short, is slipping.

Chapter Seventeen Quotes

"If he's got Dust and you've got Dust, and the Master of Jordan and every other grownup's got Dust, it must be all right. When I get out I'm going to tell all the kids in the world about this. Anyway, if it was so good, why'd you stop them doing it to me? If it was good, you should've let them do it. You should have been glad."

Related Characters: Lyra (speaker), Mrs. Coulter, Pan, The Master, The Gobblers

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 283

Explanation and Analysis

After Mrs. Coulter saves Lyra from undergoing intercision, Lyra hysterically calls Mrs. Coulter on her hypocrisy and demands to know what's so bad about Dust. Now that Mrs. Coulter has saved Lyra, it's easier for Lyra to see that Mrs. Coulter knows that intercision isn't safe or good; she's only still experimenting with it because she has access to children that society doesn't think are important, and are therefore essentially disposable lab subjects. Lyra, however, is Mrs. Coulter's daughter as well as a highborn child—and therefore, is considered too valuable to experiment with.

Lyra's suggestion that Dust must be good if all adults have it shows that she hasn't yet been drawn into the Magisterium's teachings to the point where she's not able to question what's right and what's wrong. For Lyra, this is a simple matter: she's seen the results of intercision and knows that it's bad; therefore, the Magisterium and Mrs. Coulter are bad. Her childish innocence means that it's far easier for her to see this in black and white terms, which in this situation are very appropriate.

Chapter Eighteen Quotes

"We are all subject to the fates. But we must all act as if we are not," said the witch, "or die of despair."

Related Characters: Serafina Pekkala (speaker), Lyra, Lee Scoresby

Related Themes:

Page Number: 310

Explanation and Analysis

In the balloon, the witch Serafina Pekkala tells Lee Scoresby about how destiny and free will function in tandem. Specifically, the idea that it's important to act as though one has free will, even if one actually doesn't, suggests that free will and destiny aren't actually opposing ideas, as Lee Scoresby seems to think they are. Rather, they're two parts of the same idea and it's necessary to have both. The acknowledgement that it's soul-crushing to know one's destiny and consequently feel a lack of all agency makes it clear that free will is actually more important than destiny, if only to keep people in a mental state where they're content to continue forward.

"When bears act like people, perhaps they can be tricked," said Serafina Pekkala. "When bears act like bears, perhaps they can't. No bear would normally drink spirits. Iorek Byrnison drank to forget the shame of exile, and it was only that which let the Trollesund people trick him."

Related Characters: Serafina Pekkala (speaker), Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Iofur Raknison

Related Themes:

Page Number: 317

Explanation and Analysis

As Serafina Pekkala and Lyra discuss the differences between bears and humans and whether or not bears can be tricked, Serafina suggests that it comes down to whether or not a bear acts like a bear. The implication here is that when a person is content with who they are and has a soul that fits them, they're far more impervious to tricks and deceit than someone who, as Iofur Raknison is, doesn't want to be who they are. This also reaffirms something that Jerry said to Lyra about a person whose dæmon takes a form they don't like needing to come to terms with it—given what Serafina says here, being unhappy with one's dæmon isn't just uncomfortable and depressing, it can also be dangerous and push someone toward doing something they wouldn't normally do.

Chapter Twenty Quotes

But his armor was his soul. He had made it and it fitted him. They were one. Iofur was not content with his armor; he wanted another soul as well. He was restless while Iorek was still.

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Iofur Raknison

Related Themes:

Page Number: 349

Explanation and Analysis

As Lyra watches Iorek and Iofur circle each other before the fight, she notes that Iorek looks at home in his armor while Iofur looks uncomfortable in his. She sees this as proof that Iorek will emerge victorious, given that the novel has already established that a being who is content with who they are will be much more successful and fulfilled in life.

The simple fact that Lyra can observe this and make sense of it speaks to how far she's come in her development. She

now understands that a being doesn't need a dæmon to be happy and at peace; they need a soul, and a soul that fits them at that.

Because Iorek was moving backward only to find clean dry footing and a firm rock to leap up from, and the useless left arm was really fresh and strong. You could not trick a bear, but, as Lyra had shown him, Iofur did not want to be a bear. He wanted to be a man; and Iorek was tricking him.

Related Characters: Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, Iofur Raknison

Related Themes:

Page Number: 353

Explanation and Analysis

As Lyra experiences a moment of doubt and thinks that Iorek is going to lose in his fight against Iofur, the narrator notes that Iorek is actually using what Lyra taught him about Iofur's mental state to trick the bear. While under normal circumstances bears can't be tricked, Iofur doesn't represent a normal circumstance: he desperately wants to be a human and possess a dæmon. His soul in his armor isn't enough for him, so he's uncomfortable in it and isn't able to tap into all of the qualities that bears have that would otherwise help him best Iorek. In short, because Iofur is acting like a human, he's susceptible to human follies and has forgotten how to be a bear and see through tricks.

Chapter Twenty-One Quotes

"She guessed that the two things that happen in adolescence might be connected: the change in one's dæmon and the fact that Dust began to settle. Perhaps if the dæmon were separated from the body, we might never be subject to Dust—to original sin."

Related Characters: Lord Asriel (speaker), Lyra, Mrs. Coulter

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 375

Explanation and Analysis

When Lyra arrives at Lord Asriel's home on Svalbard, he explains to her what Dust is and how Mrs. Coulter came up with the idea to separate children from their dæmons in an attempt to keep them from being subjected to original sin. Within the world of the novel, children don't experience original sin—while they may have the power to choose and to learn about good and evil, they don't have the experience and the knowledge that the novel suggests stick to adults via Dust. Keep in mind that getting rid of Dust and original sin would make a adult childlike—that is, easier to control. This indicates that the Magisterium and the Oblation Board's real goal is to create a population that's easily subjugated by turning everyone into children of sorts.

Chapter Twenty-Three Quotes

"We've heard them all talk about Dust, and they're so afraid of it, and you know what? We *believed* them, even though we could see that what they were doing was wicked and evil and wrong...We thought Dust must be bad too, because they were grown up and they said so. But what if it isn't? What if it's—"

She said breathlessly, "Yeah! What if it's really *good*..."

Related Characters: Lyra, Pan (speaker), Mrs. Coulter, Lord Asriel, The Gobblers

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 398

Explanation and Analysis

After Roger's death and after Lord Asriel enters the world in the Aurora, Lyra and Pan deduce that Dust might not actually be a bad thing. This is a wildly heretical thought, as it suggests that original sin (as represented by Dust) isn't actually bad—instead, it's what makes humans human. The fact that Lyra realizes this makes it clear that while she's still a child at this point, she now understands that it's necessary to grow up and that doing so won't be a bad thing. She'll get the experience and the knowledge that she doesn't have now and which she can only have thanks to Dust and accepting that original sin will make her who she's supposed to be. The way that Pan frames this thought also shows that they're moving towards adulthood by noting that they blindly believed adults for no reason other than that they were adults. Now, Lyra and Pan can begin to believe in themselves and what they know to be true, something that will help them fight for what's right and specifically, take on

the Magisterium and its crackdown on knowledge and free	thought.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER ONE

Lyra and her dæmon, Pan, sneak through the dark dining hall. Lyra flicks a glass and Pan reprimands her for not taking this seriously. Pan, as a moth, flutters into the Retiring Room and then calls for Lyra to follow. Lyra has never been in the Retiring Room; it's for Scholars and guests, and never for women. She begins to look around at the armchairs, the portraits of scholars, and the chafing dish prepped and ready to fry poppy heads. Pan hisses for Lyra to hide. From behind an armchair, they watch as the Master and the Butler enter and discuss that Lord Asriel hasn't arrived yet. The Butler points out the Tokay wine that he decanted for Lord Asriel and leaves, and the Master take a gown from a wardrobe and puts it on.

This introduction to Lyra and Pan shows the reader how dæmons (which Pan is) function: on one level, they represent an opposing piece of their person's personality. While Lyra is carefree and mischievous, Pan is thoughtful, guilty, and worried about getting in trouble. Because the novel sets people up to have this kind of a dual personality, it makes the case that people are multifaceted, and while their souls may be an intrinsic part of themselves, they still represent a different aspect.

Lyra is excited: Lord Asriel is her uncle, and she both admires him and is afraid of him. The Master pulls out a folded piece of paper, takes the stopper out of the decanted wine, and then pours white powder from the paper into it. His raven dæmon squawks and then she and the Master leave. Alone in the room again, Pan hisses that they need to leave, but then they hear the Steward's bell from the dining hall. Lyra and Pan are trapped; the only other door out leads into a busy hallway. Confused by what she saw, Lyra hesitates. She hears the Steward coming and hides inside the wardrobe. When he leaves again, Pan laments that Lyra never listens to him, but Lyra insists that they can stop the Master from murdering Lord Asriel.

For Lyra, what she sees is confusing but it's also a clear-cut case of right and wrong: she loves and admires Lord Asriel, so murdering him is inarguably wrong. In her understanding, it's her duty to stop the Master from poisoning him. While this may be a reasonable conclusion with the information she has, it's also important to keep in mind that the Master isn't an evil mastermind. Instead, he believes that doing this one bad thing will help Lyra in the long run. In short, this is much muddier than it appears to Lyra in this moment.

Pan tries to convince Lyra to sneak out of the Retiring Room, but Lyra refuses. She says that she's heard servants whispering about something political and she needs to know what's going on. Lyra admits that she doesn't have a plan for how she's going to save Lord Asriel, but she chastises Pan for not using his conscience for good. The two sit in silence and, being proud, Lyra tries to sort through her thoughts without Pan's help. She's anxious about Lord Asriel and knows that he's important in politics. The servants have been talking about a possible war breaking out with the Tartars in northeastern Europe, where Lord Asriel has been. Lyra and Pan deduce that the war probably won't begin soon if Lord Asriel is here.

That Lyra chastises Pan for not supporting her in doing the right thing and saving Lord Asriel suggests that at this point, Lyra is set in one way of thinking about right and wrong, while Pan recognizes that there may be more to this that they simply don't understand yet . To support this, it's telling that Lyra has no idea what's going on in the wider world—so she has no perspective to help her better understand why the Master tried to poison Lord Asriel.

The Butler reenters, stokes the fire, and grabs a handful of tobacco leaves from the smoking stand. The door starts to open and the Butler stuffs the leaves into his pocket. Lord Asriel enters with his snow leopard dæmon, Stelmaria, and the two men greet each other stiffly. The Butler runs to fetch coffee. Lyra remembers how afraid she is of Lord Asriel and realizes that she's stuck in the wardrobe now. Lord Asriel and Stelmaria discuss that he's going to show his projections and the specimens in the Retiring Room. The Butler returns with coffee, points out the Tokay, and is surprised when Lord Asriel asks for his cases and a projector. Lyra watches, wondering what urgent thing Lord Asriel has to show the Scholars.

It's important to keep in mind that despite Lyra's admiration of Lord Asriel, she's also terrified of him. Her admiration, however, causes Lyra to do her best to subsume her fear and advocate for him, believing that he can do no wrong. This will turn out to be one of the most important ways in which Lyra demonstrates that she's still a naïve child: she believes that the adults in her life overwhelmingly want to look out for her and has no room in her worldview to account for the fact that this isn't true.

Lord Asriel drinks two cups of coffee and then stands. He's tall, and seems like a wild animal as he pours himself a glass of the Tokay. Lyra shrieks, tumbles out of the wardrobe, and throws his glass to the ground. Lord Asriel grips Lyra's wrist and twists them, but lets go when Lyra spits out that she saw the Master poison the wine. Lyra explains to her furious uncle that she came in to look around and then got trapped. Someone knocks on the door and Lord Asriel orders Lyra back into the wardrobe. The Porter lets himself in with two large boxes. Lyra hears a crash and Lord Asriel curses at the Porter for spilling the Tokay. As the Porter runs off to fetch cleaning supplies, Lord Asriel murmurs to Lyra to watch the Master for anything suspicious.

That Lord Asriel first hurts Lyra like this and then decides to weaponize her to spy on the Master suggests that he's not as good and pure as Lyra might like to believe. While his desire to know what's up with the Master makes perfect sense given the circumstances, it's also possible that he has an ulterior motive in letting Lyra stay in the wardrobe at all. The wardrobe in particular can be read as a nod to C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, *which allows Pullman to situate his novel as a member of the same genre, though he picks at Christianity rather than supporting it (as Lewis did).*

The Butler and Lord Asriel's manservant, Thorold, arrive with another case and stop short when they see the Porter cleaning up the Tokay. They begin to set up the projector and Lyra realizes that she'll be able to see it from her hiding spot. Pan remains unconvinced that sneaking in was a good idea. The servants leave, Lord Asriel shoots a searing glare at Lyra, and moments later, the Master enters.

Again, Pan's reticence and the fact that as a dæmon, he's an intrinsic part of Lyra suggests that some part of Lyra knows that she shouldn't be here. To Pan's credit, seeing Lord Asriel's presentation sets Lyra on a journey that ends in tragedy and entirely upends her life.

CHAPTER TWO

Lyra watches the Master and his dæmon anxiously glance to where the Tokay was. Lord Asriel greets the Master and the other Scholars who enter, and the Master fries poppy heads. Lyra carefully pulls down a big fur robe to lie on and tries hard to stay awake, but the Scholars talk exclusively of boring London politics. Just as she starts to nod off, the Master calls the room to attention and introduces Lord Asriel. Lord Asriel quickly rearranges where Scholars are seated and suggests that the Master sit in the back, near the Librarian (and the hidden Lyra). As the Master takes his seat, he whispers to the Librarian that Lord Asriel knew about the wine. They vow to argue against a vote for funding.

Lyra's professed interest in finding out what's going on in the wider world, combined with her disinterest now that she's actually hearing about it, speaks to her youth: she desperately wants to know about the world, but doesn't yet have the maturity to fully understand or interpret the events around her. That the Master wants to withhold funding from Lord Asriel reminds the reader that whatever's going on is all about politics—and somehow, Lord Asriel and the Master are on opposite sides in this.

Lord Asriel starts the projector and begins to speak. He says that he left a year ago on a diplomatic trip to Lapland, but in actuality, he went further north to try and figure out what happened to Grumman's expedition. Lord Asriel says that he also wanted to look into a natural phenomenon only seen in the North. He then introduces his first slide: a black-and-white photo that was taken at night. It shows a hut, philosophical instruments, a man in furs, and a small figure next to him. Lord Asriel explains that this photo was developed with silver nitrate emulsion. He then shows another photo, which was developed with a special emulsion. The photo is darker, but the man is lit up and seems to have glowing particles coming from his hand. Lord Asriel says that the glowing light is moving downward, not upward, and is actually Dust.

It's important to keep in mind that many things in this chapter don't make sense to Lyra and, because of this, also aren't supposed to make total sense to the reader. Following along with Lyra allows the reader to learn about her world and start to grow up with her, rather than engaging with her story as an experienced adult might. The fact that the second photo was developed with a special emulsion suggests that whatever Lord Asriel is studying is scientific in nature and can be measured and recorded.

Silence follows, and Lyra feels that this Dust is different from normal dust. Scholars begin to gasp and Lord Asriel draws their attention to the figure next to the illuminated man. He says it's not the man's dæmon: it's a child. One Scholar asks if it's a "severed child," but Lord Asriel says the child is whole. He says that the Dust is coming down and lighting the man. He then puts in another slide of an aurora borealis, which impresses the Palmerian Professor. Lord Asriel says that this photo is the regular emulsion, and puts in the next slide. The Master whispers again to the Librarian that they can't let Lord Asriel force a vote. The slide shows the same scene—but in the middle of the Aurora, Lyra can make out a city.

Lyra's perceptive nature shines through here and reminds the reader that while she may be naïve and inexperienced, she's still perceptive and is learning things all the time. The mention of the "severed child" suggests that there's something sinister going on in relation to Dust, while seeing the city in the Aurora indicates that there's also something wonderful and otherworldly about Dust and whatever Lord Asriel is studying.

The Scholars stir excitedly, and the Palmerian Professor asks if this is the "Barnard-Stokes business." Lord Asriel addresses a Scholar and says that Grumman was probably investigating this phenomenon, but Grumman is dead. As proof, he opens one of his boxes and explains that Grumman's expedition vanished a year and a half ago. When the crate opens, there's a moment of silence and then the Scholars babble in horror and confusion. Lord Asriel explains that this is Grumman's head; he found the body in the ice near Svalbard. He points out that Grumman's head was scalped, probably by the Tartars, and invites a Scholar to inspect it. They note that there's a hole in the skull and the Scholars discuss whether the *panserbjørne* were involved. Lyra doesn't know the word.

Again, not much of this makes sense to Lyra or the reader, but it certainly intensifies Lyra's interest in the North. This, unbeknownst to Lyra, leads her even closer to fulfilling her destiny, which the reader will soon learn means that she has to go north. The mention of the Tartars and the panserbjørne—the armored bears—sets up some of England's adversaries in this universe. The scalping in particular draws out the differences between England (which in this world is entirely Christian) and the northern Tartars, which Lord Asriel seems to imply are savage and fundamentally different because of the way they treat their dead adversaries.

The Palmerian Professor says that the king of Svalbard, Iofur Raknison, tricked his way onto the throne, built a palace and a university, and could've learned to scalp people like the Tartars. Everyone laughs, but the Palmerian Professor says that Iofur is capable of doing something like this, but he's also susceptible to flattery and could behave differently. He says that more than anything, Iofur wants a dæmon. The scholars laugh again. Lyra has no idea what they're talking about and, bored, she falls asleep.

Remember that in this world, all humans have dæmons—it's part of what makes humans human—so hearing that there's a being out there without one is odd and confusing for Lyra. The way that the Palmerian Professor speaks about Iofur also suggests that Iofur could be easily manipulated, something that directly contradicts what Lyra later learns about the bears and how their minds work.

Lord Asriel wakes Lyra up much later. He says they voted to give him money but won't tell Lyra what Dust is. He also refuses to let her look at Grumman's head. Lyra says that the Master looked for the wine before anything else and then asks if she can return to the North with Lord Asriel. He refuses, but promises to bring her back a walrus tusk with Eskimo carvings. Lyra frowns at him, but finally she and Pan head to bed.

The way that Lord Asriel treats Lyra shows that he thinks of her only as a child: withholding information about Dust, insisting she stay safe at Jordan, and promising to bring her a souvenir from the North are all things that make Lyra uncomfortably aware of her age. This does, however, set Lyra up to subvert this expectation that she's just a silly child.

After Lord Asriel leaves, the Master and the Librarian sit together with drinks. They discuss that Lord Asriel thwarted the assassination attempt, and the Master says that the alethiometer is showing that there will be awful consequences of Lord Asriel's research, and "the child"—Lyra—will have to get involved. The Librarian asks if Lord Asriel is involved with the Oblation Board, and the Master says he isn't. The Oblation Board is semiprivate and run by someone who also makes the Master nervous. The Librarian thinks of how the church is organized: after a pope moved the papacy to Geneva and set up the Consistorial Court of Discipline, the papacy itself fell by the wayside. In its place, the church gained absolute power through a collection of courts, colleges, and councils known as the Magisterium. The Oblation Board is under the Magisterium's protection, and it makes the Librarian nervous.

Through what the Librarian lays out in regard to the Magisterium, it becomes clearer that the Magisterium controls most things in Lyra's world. Jordan College is, presumably, under the Magisterium's jurisdiction, which means that the Master is possibly in a very precarious and dangerous position, given that he questions the Magisterium's power and where it's putting its resources and research. This also situates everything that happens in the novel as being fundamentally political, as everyone's actions necessarily need to be filtered through the lens of what the Magisterium might think about it.

The Librarian asks what the Palmerian Professor meant by "Barnard-Stokes." The Master says that the Church teaches that there are two worlds: theirs, and the spiritual world. Barnard and Stokes suggested that there are actually many more material worlds that are nearby but unreachable, and the Church silenced them. The Master says that there's strong evidence that there *are* other worlds, and the Librarian sarcastically says that they've just given money to Lord Asriel to go look for them. The Master says that he's in a tight spot and that Jordan College will look like "a hotbed of support for heresy" to the Oblation Board and the Consistorial Court. He says that "they" haven't forgotten Lyra, who will play a major part but can't know what she's doing. He hoped to keep her safe for longer by poisoning the Tokay.

The way that the Master talks about the disconnect between the evidence for other worlds and the way that the Magisterium has silenced that research illustrates how much control the Magisterium has over life in Lyra's world. In particular, it's clear that the Magisterium is willing to do anything to gain and maintain power; it cares about being powerful more than it cares about discovering anything about the world it rules over. That the Master tried to protect Lyra by poisoning the Tokay shows again that choices are often not just right or wrong; sometimes, there are no good choices.

The Librarian believes that Lyra wouldn't listen even if the Master were able to explain things to her, but the Master thinks that Lyra might be interested in Dust. He says that knowing about it might help her on her journey. The Master also explains that Lyra will have to betray someone, which will be terrible. He says that sharing something would help him be less anxious, but the Librarian points out that as old men, it's their job to be anxious about the young while the young scorn them for it.

Again, it's telling that the Librarian thinks this way about Lyra: it shows that most adults don't think that she's capable of mature, considered thought about anything, and instead only see her as a headstrong and wild child. For Lyra, this means that she's going to have to prove herself to adults and show that she's capable of behaving maturely.

CHAPTER THREE

The narrator explains that Jordan College is the grandest, richest, and possibly, the biggest college in Oxford. It's known for its work in experimental theology. Lyra is proud of Jordan College and uses its prestige to impress her friends, but she has no idea what experimental theology is and doesn't care either. She enjoys running around with her best friend Roger, either playing alone together or engaging in "deadly warfare" against the children of other nearby colleges—or sometimes, banding with those children to war against the "townies," and then banding with the townies to fight the brickburners' children or the gyptian children, whose families arrive with their boats in the spring and fall.

Because Lyra doesn't know or care what experimental theology is, the reader doesn't get to find out either. Again, this means that the reader gets to closely follow Lyra on her journey as she gains experience and figures out how the world around her actually works, gaining maturity along the way. This description of the children's warfare shows that, at least on some level, every single thing in this world is political, down to the way that the children play.

The last time a particular gyptian family came to Oxford, Lyra and Roger stole one of their narrowboats, rode down the river, and searched for the bung (the plug) to sink it. They didn't find it and eventually abandoned the boat. Though Lyra loves the world of Oxford and the children's politics, she knows that she's somehow connected to something grander, as represented by her connection to Lord Asriel. Despite knowing this, Lyra only uses it to lord over her peers. When Lord Asriel visits the college, the Scholars catch Lyra, scrub her, dress her in a clean dress, and force her to have tea with him. Last year, Lord Asriel ascertained that Lyra had been playing on the roof and, when he decided that she looked healthy, suggested that she explore the underground portions of Jordan College too.

Lyra's understanding that she's part of something larger suggests that in some ways, she's not as childishly innocent as she might seem. Lyra's natural leadership abilities also support this, even though at this point, she's only used that skill to cause mayhem. The way that Lord Asriel guides Lyra toward exploring underground here mirrors the way he allowed her to observe from the wardrobe. In both cases, he's able to quietly point her in a direction that he feels is best without making a big fuss about it.

The narrator notes that Lyra's life proceeded like this until she hid in the Retiring Room and heard about Dust, and the narrator also says that the Librarian was wrong that Lyra wouldn't be interested in learning about it. However, at this time, Lyra is preoccupied with a rumor flying around that children are disappearing. The narrator explains how this happens and introduces Tony Makarios, a clumsy, unintelligent, but tender boy from a poor settlement along the river. Tony is in the street, knowing he won't find food at home, so he steals a hot pie at the market and settles in to eat it on some steps. There's a woman behind him (Mrs. Coulter), but Tony isn't aware of this until his dæmon, Ratter, senses the woman's golden monkey dæmon. Ratter, entranced, hops onto the monkey's hand. The monkey takes Ratter back to the woman, which suddenly alarms Tony. The woman, however, invites Tony to help her drink *chocolatl*.

Introducing Tony Makarios in a passage that doesn't follow Lyra's perspective makes it clear that it's not just a rumor that children are disappearing; it's an inarguable fact. Note also the way that the narrator describes Tony. In addition to not possessing the critical thinking skills that might make him question why this woman needs help from a small child, he's also poor—which, in the grand scheme of things, means that he's a much more vulnerable target, given that the Magisterium and the powers that be in Lyra's world don't care much for the fate of poor people.

Tony Makarios follows her down to a warehouse. There, Tony finds a dozen other children, none older than twelve. The narrator points out to the reader that none of these children have reached puberty. As Tony drinks his *chocolatl*, one boy asks what Mrs. Coulter wants. Mrs. Coulter sweetly says that she needs help, and the children feel lucky to help her. She explains that they're going on a voyage and allows the children to dictate letters to their families. Tony knows his mother can't read so he doesn't send her a letter. The children all say goodbye and board a ship. Once they're gone, Mrs. Coulter throws the letters in the fire.

The narrator's note that none of these children have reached puberty offers up another way in which these children are vulnerable: they're taught to defer to adults and not advocate for themselves, and they certainly have few rights in society the way that adults do. Because of this combination of being poor and young, they're the perfect target: gullible, hungry, and unwilling to stand up to Mrs. Coulter.

Eventually, people begin to notice that children from the slums are disappearing all over England. The stories differ as to who is stealing the children, but everyone calls the culprits the Gobblers. One day, Lyra suggests to Roger that they play kids and Gobblers, which she says entails playing hide-and-seek and then cutting Roger open, which the Gobblers do. Roger isn't convinced that the Gobblers do this, but he accepts her story when she tells an even more fantastical one about Lord Asriel killing Tartars with a withering stare. Lyra steals the Butler's keys and the children sneak into the cellar to look at the wine. They forget the Gobblers and decide to find out what wine tastes like and what it's like to be drunk.

Experimenting with the wine like this reinforces that while both Lyra and Roger are still children, they're definitely approaching puberty and are beginning to explore what it's like to be an adult in the world. Their interest in the Gobblers speaks to their naïveté, however: worried adults certainly aren't turning the Gobblers into a fun game to pass the time. This shows how, in the hands of children, everything can become a game, no matter how serious.

After this, Lyra and Roger begin spending more time underground. Lyra suspects that they'll find and capture Gobblers there. One day, they wander into the crypt and inspect the inscriptions on the dead Masters' coffins. Each coffin also has an image of an animal, which Lyra reasons is the Master's dæmon. In the next room, they find shelves with skulls on them. Pan and Roger's dæmon are scared, but Lyra pulls a skull down to inspect it. A coin falls from the base of the skull and she sees that it's engraved with a cat. Each skull has a coin representing its owner's dæmon. Later, Lyra switches the coins around despite Pan's protests. A "night-ghast" visits her that night and the next day, she puts the coins back where they belong.

The way that Pan and Roger's dæmon react, coupled with the night-ghast (presumably the equivalent of a nightmare), offers some clues into how important dæmons are to a person's identity and how they function in the afterlife. Pan and Roger's dæmon likely know instinctively that this is wrong because of what they are (and it's worth noting that later, the narrator reveals that it's taboo to touch another person's dæmon, a rule that Lyra is likely breaking here as she effectively makes dæmons touch other Scholars).

One afternoon, the Intercessor catches Lyra and Roger coming out of the crypts. He calls the children over to ask what they were doing. He sends Roger back to the kitchen and then asks Lyra if she craves girls or other highborn children as friends. Lyra stubbornly insists that she's fine. Having exhausted the crypts, Lyra and Roger return to the streets. Just as they lose interest in the Gobblers, however, the Gobblers arrive in Oxford.

The Intercessor's interrogation suggests that Lyra truly is more important in the wider world than she knows. This raises the question of why she was raised by the Scholars at Jordan College in the first place, and who she truly is—questions that, as she moves toward maturity, Lyra will begin to answer for herself.

In preparation for the horse fair, Lyra and her cronies plan to capture a narrowboat again. As Lyra wanders along the river with her friends Hugh and Simon (Roger is busy with chores), she hears Ma Costa, a grand gyptian woman, yelling at a horse trader. Lyra is nervous—Ma Costa is kind, but has hit Lyra before and is the owner of the narrowboat that Lyra stole—but Ma Costa is anxious, not angry. When Ma Costa hits the trader, Lyra asks a gyptian child what's going on. The child says that the Gobblers got Ma Costa's son, Billy. Lyra and the nearby gyptian children all prepare for a fight but before they can begin, Ma Costa asks if Lyra has seen Billy. Lyra is scared, as gyptians never worry about missing children—they usually know that other gyptians will take care of them.

The gyptians, like the poor who live on land, are extremely vulnerable. This explains why the Gobblers took Billy, especially given the animosity that Lyra and her other college friends express toward the gyptians—to them, the gyptians are fundamentally different and are probably treated quite differently under the law. This shows again that the Gobblers are preying on the most vulnerable members of society and on a population that is easy to kidnap from, given that they don't usually worry about children who are absent for a few hours.

Ma Costa stumbles away, yelling for Billy, and the children discuss what the Gobblers actually are. One boy says that they throw kids in a white truck and they're called Gobblers because they eat kids. Lyra takes charge of the situation, points out that anyone could be a Gobbler, and a group of 30 children scrambles over the wharf, looking for Billy. They don't find him. At dinnertime, Lyra and Simon head back to Jordan, and Simon says that a child is gone from the market too. Lyra frantically escapes the Porter's attempt to keep her in and finds one of her older friends in the streets. The older kids are skeptical that the Gobblers are real, but one admits that he knows of a missing child.

Lyra's sense of responsibility and fear when it comes to Billy and the other missing child shows that while she may still be young, she already has a firm sense that kidnapping children from their families is wrong. When it's made real to her like this, Lyra also experiences a moment of new maturity. Now, it's no longer fun to play kids and Gobblers, as the Gobblers aren't just an imaginary threat. As far as Lyra knows, she and everyone she knows could be at risk—a terrifying proposition.

Suddenly, Lyra flashes on what she saw in the Retiring Room, and the Scholar asking if the child in the photo was a "severed child." She realizes she hasn't seen Roger since morning, so she and Pan run back to Jordan. Nobody in the Jordan kitchens seems to care about Roger, so Lyra knocks over dishes, runs to her room, and barricades the door. She opens the window, climbs onto the roof, and screams. Lyra looks around at Oxford and thinks that she wants her world to never change, but that it's changing anyway if someone is stealing children. She and Pan discuss rescuing Roger and what the Gobblers are doing to the captured kids. Lyra reasons that they cut them in half and turn them into slaves for the mines.

Though there's no real reason why, at this point, Lyra is putting the mention of a "severed child" and the Gobblers together, she is right to do so. This takes the problem of the Gobblers and makes them even more sinister than they were in Lyra's storytelling, given that they concern and scare even the Scholars. Even more so than Billy, the fact that Roger is missing makes this personal for Lyra. This pushes her even more toward growing up.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Lonsdale, shouts for Lyra. Lyra crawls down through the window and doesn't ask why she needs to wash and dress. Lyra accuses Mrs. Lonsdale of not caring about Roger, so Mrs. Lonsdale smacks Lyra. The older woman says that Lyra is going to have dinner with the Master and his guests and forces Lyra into her best dress. Five minutes later, Lyra knocks on the Master's door and a servant shows her into the drawing room. He introduces Lyra to boring guests and then to Mrs. Coulter.

Mrs. Coulter's appearance here with the Master shows that she's not just some shadowy evil figure—instead, she's a part of polite society and is at least tangentially associated with the university system. This reminds the reader that the Gobblers aren't a rogue criminal operation: they're under the Magisterium's jurisdiction and a known quantity in high society.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mrs. Coulter invites Lyra to sit next to her at dinner. Lyra is entranced; she's never seen a woman like her before. She tells Mrs. Coulter everything about her life and ignores the other dinner guests. After the meal, one woman asks Lyra if the Scholars are going to send her to school. Blankly, Lyra says no. She says that Lord Asriel promised to take her to the North next time he goes, and Mrs. Coulter says that he told her this too. Mrs. Coulter goes on to say that she's here because of Lord Asriel, whom she met at the Royal Arctic Institute while studying the Aurora. Lyra is then even more interested in Mrs. Coulter.

Lyra's interest in Mrs. Coulter shows how even a perceptive and sharp child like Lyra can be easily manipulated into following someone who does awful things. It's worth noting, however, that Lyra is somehow connected to the upper classes, which means that she's likely safe from whatever the General Oblation Board is doing. Unlike the poor children and the gyptians, Lyra is likely seen as more valuable.

As the guests leave, the Master sends Lyra to his study so they can speak. They discuss Mrs. Coulter and Lyra deems the woman wonderful. The Master looks older than usual, and Lyra realizes that soon, he'll be buried in the crypt with the other Masters. With a sigh, the Master says that Lyra has been safe in Jordan, but it's now time to leave Jordan College. Lyra insists that she wants to stay at Jordan forever and glowers when the Master says that Lyra needs female company—to Lyra, this means boring, smelly female Scholars. The Master asks if Lyra would like to live with Mrs. Coulter, though, and Lyra immediately perks up. The Master invites Mrs. Coulter into the study, and Mrs. Coulter asks Lyra if she's ready to be her assistant and to go North. Lyra is speechless.

Lyra's realization that the Master is getting old is a sign of maturity. She has these moments throughout the novel, and they make it clear that growing up and gaining maturity aren't linear processes; it's possible to have these moments where Lyra is fully aware of her place in the world and others' mortality, and then move on to telling childish lies and being drawn in by Mrs. Coulter's glamour.

Mrs. Lonsdale wakes Lyra before dark the next morning and sends her to knock on the Master's window before she leaves with Mrs. Coulter. The Master lets Lyra in and Lyra asks if she's still leaving. Oddly, the Master says that he can't keep Lyra from going. He then gives her a strange compass in a velvet case and says she needs to keep it private. It's called an alethiometer, he says, and it tells the truth. The Master begins to say something about Lord Asriel, but he stops when someone knocks on his door.

The Master's wording lets the reader in on the fact that he doesn't want to let Lyra go with Mrs. Coulter, something that Lyra doesn't pick up on because she's both confused and excited. Giving her the alethiometer also muddies things, as asking her to keep it private suggests that Mrs. Coulter isn't trustworthy—an idea that Lyra's admiration won't allow at this point.

Lyra only remembers that Roger is missing after she says goodbye to the servants. She feels guilty, but reasons that Mrs. Coulter will be able to help her look for him. In the zeppelin, Pan sits on Lyra's lap as an ermine and stares out the window while Mrs. Coulter talks about how wonderful London is. When they get to Mrs. Coulter's flat, Lyra is in awe: she's never seen anything so pretty. Mrs. Coulter shows Lyra to a lavish bathroom with pink soap and Lyra and Pan play in the bubbles. Lyra remembers the alethiometer in her coat pocket and feels confused, as she promised to keep it secret, but Mrs. Coulter seems kind—while the Master tried to poison Lord Asriel.

Lyra's attempt to figure out where her loyalties lie speaks to her youth again. It also reminds the reader that though Lyra is a child, she's already very caught up in the adult politics of the wider world and will soon need to learn how to navigate those politics. In order to do this, Lyra will need to learn to trust herself and to evaluate the adults around her in a way that she's still unwilling to do.

Mrs. Coulter takes Lyra to the Royal Arctic Institute for lunch and points out other notable members. As they eat calves' liver, she shares that bear liver is poisonous. They look at relics in the library and then go shopping. This is an entirely new experience for Lyra. The clothes are pretty and trying them on is exhilarating. Back at the flat, Lyra takes another bath and Mrs. Coulter comes in to wash Lyra's hair. Pan watches with curiosity until Mrs. Coulter glares at him, and then he modestly turns away like the golden monkey. This is the first time he has to look away from Lyra. Then, Lyra puts on her new nightdress and climbs into the softest bed she's ever slept in.

Making Pan look away from Lyra's body in the bath is a major indicator that Lyra is quickly approaching puberty, but it also suggests that Mrs. Coulter doesn't espouse being wholly open and at ease with oneself. When considered in terms of the way the novel later explains how original sin came to be, this makes sense: gaining experience as one approaches adulthood, it suggests, means experiencing shame about one's body, which not being open with one's dæmon could represent. (This also connects to the biblical Adam and Eve story, which is mentioned later in this book as well—when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they suddenly became ashamed of their nakedness for the first time.)

Once Mrs. Coulter is gone, Pan pulls at Lyra's hair and they take out the alethiometer. It has needles pointing in different directions, small painted pictures, and three wheels. Lyra makes the three short needles point at different pictures, but she can't control the fourth. They wonder if Lyra is supposed to take it to Lord Asriel, but Mrs. Coulter interrupts their conversation to tell Lyra to go to bed.

Here, Lyra's inability to work the alethiometer speaks to the simplicity of the world she is used to. While the object more broadly represents Lyra's innocence, in this case it suggests that she needs a bit more experience in order to be able to properly ascertain what the truth is.

CHAPTER FIVE

Over the next few weeks, Lyra goes everywhere with Mrs. Coulter. She learns how to eat asparagus, gets to wear beautiful clothes, and attends the theater. When they're not out and about, Mrs. Coulter does her best to fill in the many gaps in Lyra's education. Despite these gaps, Lyra yearns to show Mrs. Coulter that she does know things, so when Mrs. Coulter tells Lyra about electrons, Lyra says that they're particles like Dust, but they're negatively charged. At the mention of Dust the golden monkey snaps to attention, and Mrs. Coulter asks Lyra what she knows about Dust. Lyra says that it lights up adults but not children, and fibs about where she learned this. Later, Pan tells Lyra that when Lyra mentioned Dust, Mrs. Coulter grabbed her dæmon, who seemed ready to jump at Lyra.

The way that Mrs. Coulter and the golden monkey react to Lyra's mention of Dust makes it very clear that whatever Dust is, it's a sensitive subject and not something that Mrs. Coulter believes that children should know about. This knowledge that adults are keeping things from her helps Lyra develop her distrust of Mrs. Coulter and learn that as she moves on and grows up, she needs to place her trust in people who are open and trusting with her in return.

Lyra sometimes thinks of Roger, but she soon forgets him in favor of whatever wonderful thing that Mrs. Coulter does next. After six weeks, Mrs. Coulter decides to throw a cocktail party and involves Lyra in the planning. In bed that night, Pan whispers that they're never going to the North, but Lyra insists that Mrs. Coulter will keep her word. Pan says that Mrs. Coulter is tutoring Lyra to keep her occupied and points out that Mrs. Coulter is turning Lyra into a pet. Lyra turns away, but she knows that Pan is right.

That Pan figures out what Mrs. Coulter is doing before Lyra does solidifies his role as a conscience or instinct of sorts; for Lyra, it's necessary to have him around so that he can continually point her in the right direction and help her make sense of her world.

On the day of the party, Lyra has her hair done at a hairdresser's. After Lyra emerges from her bedroom, dressed in her new dress and wearing a small shoulder bag with the alethiometer hidden in it, Mrs. Coulter tells Lyra to leave the bag in her room. Lyra resists, but the golden monkey pins Pan down roughly and begins to pull on one of his ears as though to tear it off. Lyra sobs, terrified, and promises to put the bag away. Pan leaps into Lyra's arms and Lyra slams the door to her bedroom. A moment later, Mrs. Coulter opens it, tells Lyra to never slam doors, and to behave herself for the party. She asks for a kiss, and Lyra finds Mrs. Coulter's smell odd. In the drawing room, Mrs. Coulter asks Lyra about the flowers as though nothing happened.

The way that the golden monkey treats Pan in this situation betrays Mrs. Coulter's cruel and unfeeling nature: she's not above causing others pain to make a point or to gain control. In this sense, Mrs. Coulter more broadly represents the Magisterium, which on a much grander scale does exactly the same thing. Mrs. Coulter's behavior shows Lyra that she's not trustworthy and will attack Lyra's very soul in order to get her way, something that, in the long run, pushes Lyra toward greater independence.

Lyra has no trouble pretending to be charming, but Pan remains disgusted with Mrs. Coulter and the golden monkey. As the room fills with guests, Lyra feels more and more like a pet. One woman mistakes Lyra for Mrs. Coulter's daughter and seems curious when Lyra says that her parents died in an aeronautical accident in the North. As she wanders away, Lyra hears a man mention Dust to a young woman. The man says that a scientist called Rusakov discovered Dust and that it's attracted to adults and adolescents, but not children. He drops his voice and notes that Mrs. Coulter and the Oblation Board know all about it. He notices Lyra watching and asks if she's safe from the Oblation Board.

Lyra's ability to be charming and conduct herself to Mrs. Coulter's standards at the party speaks, in part, to Lyra's skill at lying and acting. She certainly feels vulnerable and disgusted, just like Pan, but she also understands that her safety and happiness depends on getting through this without making Mrs. Coulter angry. This man's information about Dust makes it possible that children are being targeted because they don't have Dust, while not knowing what Dust is in Lyra's case makes it clear that she's still a child.

Lyra says that she's safe and mentions the dangers that plague children in Oxford, including a werewolf and the Gobblers. At this, the man interrupts and says that that's what they call the Oblation Board. The woman asks why they have the name, and before Lyra can tell one of her scary stories, the man says that it's from the initials of the General Oblation Board. He explains that in the middle ages, parents gave their children to the church to be monks or nuns. The children were known as oblates, which means "sacrifice." The General Oblation Board is drawing on those ideas with Dust. The man suggests that Lyra speak to Lord Boreal and points out an older man across the room.

As in the Retiring Room, the bigger picture that this man is gesturing at doesn't make sense to Lyra or the reader, given that Lyra is a child and doesn't understand what Dust is or what the Oblation Board does. The revelation that the kidnapped children are sacrifices of some sort, and specifically that they're connected to the Church, suggests that this is about control and guiding the population in a particular direction.

The young woman, however, introduces herself as Adèle Starminster, a journalist, and asks to speak with Lyra. Adèle wants to know if Mrs. Coulter is nice and what Lyra does for her, but Lyra keeps her answers short. Mrs. Coulter appears in the doorway and quietly says that Adèle wasn't invited and won't be working as a journalist for long. She sends the young woman away. Mrs. Coulter smells metallic again, and Lyra realizes that the golden monkey is gone. The monkey appears, and Mrs. Coulter asks Lyra to let her know if anyone else shows up uninvited.

Dæmons cannot move far from their humans in normal circumstances, so the golden monkey's absence makes Mrs. Coulter seem even scarier and as though she is, to some degree, less human. Her threat to end Adèle's career reminds the reader and Lyra of how powerful Mrs. Coulter is in both government and society. This suggests that Lyra's adversary is the overall concentration of power, not just Mrs. Coulter herself.

Pan whispers in Lyra's ear and says that the golden monkey was just in their bedroom and must know about the alethiometer. Lyra looks around for the professor who knew about the Gobblers, but she sees the man leave. She feels anxious and exposed, so she wanders around the party until someone sends her to Lord Boreal. The older man asks what Mrs. Coulter is teaching Lyra. Feeling rebellious, Lyra says that she's learning about the Oblation Board and Rusakov Particles. Uncomfortable under Lord Boreal's stare, Lyra admits that Lord Asriel showed her a photo of Dust and that the Oblation Board took Roger. She says that she hasn't "taken part" yet when Lord Boreal asks, but neither she nor Pan know what he's talking about.

In this situation, Lyra demonstrates that lying or embellishing can be an effective way to obtain important and necessary information. The fact that learning these things helps propel Lyra toward maturity and adulthood also suggests that learning to read situations and employ lying as needed is one of the ways that children learn to grow up, and that adulthood itself is marked by these morally ambiguous spaces.

Lord Boreal asks if Lyra knows what happens to the children. Lyra says that she only knows that it's about Dust and that the children are a sacrifice. Lord Boreal deems this dramatic; he says that what happens is for the children's own good and they come of their own accord. He smiles at Lyra and both Lyra and Pan feel horrified. She wanders around until she hears a bishop say that Lord Asriel is currently imprisoned at Svalbard by the panserbjørne—the armored bears—because of his heretical experiments. Lyra and Pan lock themselves in their room and decide to run away. Lyra grabs her warmest clothes, money, and the alethiometer and when Pan says it's safe, they race outside.

Discovering that the panserbjørne are bears, and that they have imprisoned Lord Asriel, makes Lyra feel as though her world has been turned upside-down. This shift represents an uncomfortable step into adulthood and indicates that part of growing up is coming to terms with the myriad ways in which a person must navigate difficult emotional and moral waters throughout one's life. Lord Boreal's insistence that what happens is for the children's own good is questionable, given that they're experimenting only on vulnerable children—clearly, it's not "good" enough to try on someone like Lyra.

CHAPTER SIX

Lyra and Pan, as a wildcat, walk away from the river. They're both thrilled to be free. They stop at a coffee cart on the street and a gentleman in a silk hat pays for Lyra's coffee and sandwich. Lyra scans the street, which is filling with theatergoers, tells the man her name is Alice, and refuses his offer of brandy. She tells the man that she's waiting for her father, who's a murderer. Lyra and Pan continue to walk and hours later, they try to find a place to sleep.

In this situation, Lyra's lie keeps her safe. While it's impossible to know for sure if this man means Lyra harm, Lyra nevertheless shows that she understands how to use lies to deter suspicious adults from getting too close or taking too much of an interest in her.

Lyra and Pan head toward the wharf and carefully peek into the window of a hut, where an old man is making tea. Lyra suggests they ask the man to let them in, but Pan, terrified, turns into various birds: two men with nets are running at them. Pan turns into an eagle and guides Lyra through the dark alleys, but the nets fall over her and a fox dæmon attacks Pan. Lyra cries in pain but then sees that one of her captors is dead, with an arrow sticking out of his neck. Lyra, the dæmons, and her living captor stop as another arrow hits the man. Someone drags the man away and another man helps free Lyra.

It's worth considering that the fact that a child's dæmon can transform might not just represent immaturity; it may be a way for children to protect themselves in a world that says it looks out for them but doesn't in reality. Pan can, in turn, guide Lyra as a bird and then take forms that allow him to fight the fox dæmon, in addition to taking forms that keep Lyra warm or help her sneak around—all things that help her grow and stay safe.

Lyra comforts Pan and then recognizes one of her saviors as Tony Costa, Billy Costa's older brother. Lyra cries with relief and anxiety and hopes that the Costas don't remember that she stole their boat. Tony starts to lead Lyra away, but Lyra and Pan turn to watch the dead men's dæmons fade and drift away. They slip onto the narrowboat and into the cabin, and Ma Costa unquestioningly grabs Lyra in a huge hug. She shushes Lyra, heats up milk, and puts her to bed.

Lyra and Pan's interest in what happens to the men's dæmons as they die speaks more broadly to normal human curiosity about what happens when a person dies. Seeing the dæmons fade reminds the reader that dæmons aren't true animals; they're actually a part of their person's soul.

Lyra wakes up in the morning, checks that she still has the alethiometer, and enters the kitchen. Ma Costa enters from the deck and starts to make Lyra breakfast, refusing to answer questions and saying only that there's some trouble brewing. Tony enters the kitchen too and once Lyra eats, they ask for her story. She tells it clumsily, leaving out only the alethiometer, and says that Mrs. Coulter is one of the Gobblers. She starts to say what they do to the kids, but Ma Costa hurriedly leaves. Tony says that they know that they take kids north and experiment on them, and they suspect that they sell kids to the Tartars, who eat them.

Talking about what the Gobblers do to the captured children in front of Ma Costa is somewhat thoughtless; Lyra's choice to start this thought again reinforces her youth and the selfishness that sometimes goes along with it. Tony's willingness to talk to Lyra and share what they know, on the other hand, allows Lyra to start to feel more grown up and serious. By treating her this way, Tony helps to guide her toward a more mature state of being.

Tony tells Lyra about ghosts unique to the northern regions. He also mentions the panserbjørne, and Lyra interjects that the bears have imprisoned Lord Asriel. Tony says if it's true, Lord Asriel won't ever get out, as the bears are mercenaries and unbeatable thanks to the armor they make with meteoric iron. He notes, however, that if a person makes a deal with a bear, the bear will keep his word. Tony also explains that they know what happens to the kidnapped kids because they caught a Gobbler. He says that the Gobblers target gyptian kids more than others, so the gyptians are planning a rescue mission. Tony says that they'll see John Faa, the king of the gyptians. Lyra says she wants to go too to rescue Roger. She thinks that she also wants to rescue Lord Asriel.

When Tony confirms that the Gobblers target gyptian children more than others, it reinforces the novel's assertion that the Magisterium is more than willing to prey on its most vulnerable populations in order to meet its goals. For the Magisterium, sacrificing gyptian children likely isn't much of a cost. Lyra's desire to rescue Roger and Lord Asriel indicates that she wants to take responsibility for others and make things right in the world, something that speaks to her growing maturity and sense of justice.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Lyra feels much better with a goal, so she throws herself into chores on the boat. She doesn't notice that the Costas watch closely for signs that anyone is unusually interested in her, as they know that the Oblation Board is looking for her. Tony hears gossip in pubs that the Board is conducting raids with no explanation, and it's rumored that they're after a girl—which is odd, as they've taken no interest in all the other missing children. Because of this, Lyra must stay below when they pass inhabited areas. Ma Costa even hides Lyra in a secret compartment while police search their boat. Despite these setbacks, the Costas' boat approaches the wild fens, a swampy wilderness where East Anglia meets Holland.

Again, hearing that the Oblation Board is after Lyra but hasn't pursued the other children's disappearances shows that they don't think that the gyptian or poor children are worth the resources to look for; Lyra, as a highborn child and as Mrs. Coulter's adoptive daughter, is far more valuable. The gyptians' willingness to hide Lyra speaks to their sense of responsibility to humanity as a whole, despite their status as an oppressed minority. They believe that all children are worth saving, even ones that are very different from them.

The Costas' boat and a thousand other gyptian boats head for an ancient meeting hall, the *Zaal*, in the middle of the fens. Lyra listens to the gyptian legends and picks up words in the Fen-Dutch gyptian dialect. One afternoon, Ma Costa reminds Lyra that she's not actually gyptian: she's made of fire, while gyptians are water people. Lyra doesn't take this as a compliment and doesn't understand why it should be. The Costas reach the Zaal by evening and Ma Costa cooks eels for dinner. Tony has a drink in a bar and returns with the news that the Roping—the meeting—is tonight, and there are rumors that Lyra is with gyptians and will be there. He laughs and Lyra feels hopeful.

For Lyra, her youth means that it's easier for her to experiment with different identities and toy around with acting like a gyptian child. Ma Costa, however, suggests that something about a person's identity is far more set in stone than what Lyra would like to think. This indicates that while Lyra and Pan may still be in a transformative and experimental state, there's something in them that's already settled, and in some ways, they're just working toward reaching that.

As Tony and Ma Costa lead Lyra to the Zaal, people stare and point. They enter the craggy old hall and squeeze in on the side. Eight men step onto a platform and seven sit in carved wooden chairs. Tony whispers that the standing one is John Faa. John Faa welcomes the gyptians, states the purpose of the meeting, and says that anyone who wants to give Lyra to the police and cash in on the thousand-sovereign reward can leave. Then, he states what they know: the Gobblers are taking gyptian and "landloper" children to the North. They don't know exactly what happens, but they know that the police and the clergy facilitate this. He proposes that they send a rescue expedition.

The relationship between the police and the clergy reminds the reader again that the Magisterium is far-reaching and holds sway in all sorts of government agencies. This also explains why no authorities have bothered to look for missing children; in addition to simply not caring about the gyptian or poor "landloper" children, they've likely been ordered *not to look. John Faa's defense of Lyra confirms that the gyptians feel a sense of obligation to make life better for everyone, not just themselves.*

One man stands and asks if they're supposed to rescue landloper kids too. John Faa says it'd be cruel to leave them; they're innocent. He asks for the assembly's blessing, and they all roar their approval. John Faa asks the families to raise a tax and to return in three days. After he dismisses everyone, Ma Costa points out who the other men on the platform are and specifically mentions Farder Coram, an extremely old man. Tony takes Lyra to speak to John Faa, and Lyra feels extremely shy knowing that she's worth so much money. John Faa shakes Lyra's hand warmly and then leads her into a big room with Farder Coram. Lyra is scared of the shaky old man.

The man who dissents here makes it clear that while the general gyptian belief may be that all humans are worthy of care and help, the group isn't a monolith—people still have the ability to choose how they behave and how they think of their role in the wider world. Lyra's shyness with John Faa is something that speaks to her growing maturity, as she recognizes that he's doing something dangerous for what seems like an entirely moral reason.

Lyra tells John Faa about running away from Mrs. Coulter, who she says is one of the Gobblers. She says that Mrs. Coulter didn't realize that Lyra knows children who were taken, and she shares what she knows about Grumman's head and Lord Asriel's work, and states her intention to rescue him. She tells them everything she can remember about Lord Asriel's visit and about Dust, and specifically about the special photographs of the city in the Aurora. John Faa says that Farder Coram is a wise seer; he's been following the Gobblers and Lyra herself for years. Anxiously, Lyra insists that she never would've pulled the bung on the Costas' boat, which makes the men laugh. They assure her that she's not in trouble.

That Lyra goes immediately to fearing that John Faa and Farder Coram are going to punish her for stealing the narrowboat draws the reader back towards thinking of Lyra as naïve, rather than a child who's wise beyond her years. When she doesn't understand that Farder Coram may have a number of other reasons to be keeping an eye on Lyra, it shows how narrow her perspective still is and makes her seem even younger.

John Faa asks Lyra if she knows where she came from. Dazed, Lyra says that her parents died in an airship accident, but John Faa says this isn't true: her father is Lord Asriel. He says that both Lord Asriel and Lyra's mother were passionate, impulsive people, and they fell in love immediately even though Lyra's mother was already married. When Lyra's mother gave birth she was afraid of her husband's reaction, so she sent Lyra to Oxfordshire to live with a gyptian wet nurse. When her husband found out, he went intending to kill the nurse and baby Lyra. Lord Asriel stopped him and killed him, and in the ensuing lawsuit, Lord Asriel lost all his assets. Lyra's mother wanted nothing to do with Lyra, so Lord Asriel took Lyra to Jordan College. He insisted that Lyra's mother never have access to her.

The story of Lord Asriel's downfall reads like the legend of a wronged hero to Lyra: he defended his lover and his baby and was wrongfully punished for doing so. Learning the truth of what happened, however, also means that Lyra becomes even less willing to consider the possibility that Lord Asriel might not be as good as she thinks he is. His willingness to go immediately to killing a man rather than trying to resolve this in other ways suggests that he might have a cruel streak that, to Lyra, reads as heroism instead.

John Faa says that in the years after, people began to get anxious about Dust. He tells Lyra that the pastry cook at Jordan has been watching over her and passed it on when Lyra left with the person Lord Asriel said she should never leave with: Mrs. Coulter, her mother. Lyra is shocked. John Faa says that Mrs. Coulter must have some power over the Master. Lyra studies John Faa and Farder Coram and then tells them that she saw the Master try to poison Lord Asriel, and says that the Master gave her the alethiometer. She pulls out the instrument and says she doesn't know how to read it.

The revelation that Mrs. Coulter is Lyra's mother and that she was never supposed to have custody of her daughter brings up again the fact that everything that involves Lyra is intensely political. This also explains why the Master noted that he couldn't prevent Lyra from going with Mrs. Coulter. He didn't want to do it, which suggests that he was trying to do the right thing and protect Lyra, but things were out of his control.

Farder Coram says it's a truth teller and explains briefly how to read it: a person can ask a question by pointing the three short hands at different pictures with many meanings, and then the long needle will show the answer. He says that there's a book with all the meanings in a library somewhere. Lyra says that she kept the alethiometer secret, but the golden monkey found it. John Faa states what they know: the Master did his best to keep Lyra safe; Mrs. Coulter got the Church to help with the Oblation Board; and with the Church gaining power recently, the Master must have felt that Jordan College was dangerous. He knows that the Master loves Lyra, so the Master must have felt that giving her to Mrs. Coulter would be safer than letting her stay at Jordan.

The moral ambiguity of the Master's actions impresses upon the reader (if not necessarily upon Lyra) the fact that right and wrong don't always exist in an easily discernable relationship with each other. Instead, what might look wrong from the outside may seem better with the addition of more or different information. Giving Lyra the alethiometer when she's such a skilled liar suggests that going forward, Lyra will need to learn how to blend her lies with the truth to come to a better understanding of where her morals should lie.

They discuss what the Master intended in giving Lyra the alethiometer. Lyra thinks that the Master wanted her to keep it from Lord Asriel, but Farder Coram wonders if he intended the opposite. He suggests that the alethiometer could help Lord Asriel free himself from the bears. The men give the alethiometer back to Lyra, who feels suddenly shy. She asks which gyptian women nursed her, and John Faa says that it was Ma Costa. They send her back outside where Ma Costa hugs Lyra, kisses her, and takes her to bed.

Despite the revelation that Ma Costa has personal and emotional history with Lyra, it's still worth keeping in mind that the entire gyptian community is still willing to rally around Lyra to keep her safe. Again, this speaks to the general gyptian mindset that prioritizes caring for others over being exclusionary or selfish.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Lyra quickly comes to terms with the fact that Lord Asriel is her father, but she's confused about her emotions surrounding Mrs. Coulter being her mother. She doesn't worry long, however, as she throws herself into riling up the gyptian children and awing them with stories about Lord Asriel's unjust captivity. Outside of the fens, police search furiously for Lyra. She hears airships flying above, presumably looking for her, and either covers her blond hair or hides when she hears them. Lyra also asks Ma Costa questions about her babyhood until she creates a vivid, questionably truthful memory of what happened when Lord Asriel killed Mr. Coulter. When she's alone, Lyra pores over the alethiometer and tries to figure out how to read it. She discovers how to hold her mind so that the needle moves more purposefully.

The way that Lyra constructs a "memory" of Lord Asriel saving her from Mr. Coulter shows how at this point, Lyra is using a combination of truth and lies (she surely doesn't actually remember this) in order to come to a greater understanding of who she is and where she comes from. This play between truth and lie is, ultimately, what helps Lyra move toward adulthood. Relatedly, learning how to make the needle of the alethiometer move suggests that Lyra's own moral compass is sharpening.

On the third evening, the gyptians return to the Zaal. John Faa accepts gold and pledges of men from each of the six gyptian families. He thanks the assembly for their generosity, says that they'll charter a ship and sail north, and then invites questions. One man asks why the Gobblers are capturing children, and John Faa says that all they know is that it's "a theological matter." Another man says that because of Lyra, Parliament is considering rescinding the gyptians' right to free movement and asks why they're bothering to protect her. John Faa says that Lyra is Lord Asriel's daughter and reminds everyone that Lord Asriel fought hard for gyptian rights and has saved gyptian children from drowning. The man who asked the question sits, shamed into silence.

The implication here is that without Lord Asriel's advocacy, the gyptians wouldn't be in nearly as good of a position as they are now. This reinforces how vulnerable and marginalized the gyptians are as a group. While John Faa certainly can't answer every question truthfully like the alethiometer can, his insistence on doing the right thing, even when it's hard or could hurt the gyptians, provides Lyra another role model to look up to as she figures out right from wrong.

John Faa gives orders to the six family heads to begin preparations and asks again for questions. A man asks if John Faa intends to rescue Lord Asriel from the bears, but John Faa says that it'd be too costly. He will, however, look for information. Another woman asks if they plan to take revenge on the Gobblers for what they've done. John Faa says that it's more important to rescue the kids than it is to exact revenge, but when the time comes, they will punish the Gobblers. John Faa calls the meeting to a close. He and the other men head for a private room and Tony Costa laughs at Lyra when she suggests that they need her. When Lyra says she wants to go too, Tony promises to bring her back a walrus tooth.

Tony's promise to bring Lyra a walrus tusk mirrors Lord Asriel's promise to do the same. This makes it clear that to most adults, Lyra still looks like a child—and though she may be important, she's not someone they need to treat like an important adult. John Faa's focus on saving the children over exacting revenge demonstrates again that he's most interested in doing the right thing and supporting people.

Scowling, Lyra plays with her new friends. She eventually goes back to the Zaal and knocks on the door. When a man opens it, Lyra boldly says that she wants to come to rescue the kids and Roger, states all the things she knows, and suggests that they might need a child with them. John Faa tells Lyra kindly that they can't take her into danger and refuses, even when Lyra says that she's learning to read the alethiometer. He sends her away, and Lyra declares to Pan that they *will* go.

Lyra's request here is really a request to be accepted as an adult and let in on adult politics. Asking for this suggests that at least in some ways and on some levels, Lyra is ready to participate and grapple with more mature ideas.

CHAPTER NINE

Lyra spends the next few days trying to plan how she can stow away and join the expedition. She dismisses most of her plans. When she's not plotting, she pesters the men in charge. She's most eager to help Benjamin de Ruyter, the man in charge of spying, but when he disappears Lyra turns her attentions to Farder Coram. Farder Coram indulges Lyra and listens to her talk. Lyra is especially taken with Sophonax, Farder Coram's large, tawny cat dæmon. Her fur looks luxurious, but because touching another person's dæmon is taboo, Lyra only dreams of touching her. While Sophonax is sleek and healthy, Farder Coram walks tremblingly on two canes. His mind is as sharp as anyone's.

Sophonax's beautiful and healthy appearance indicates that whatever is going on with Farder Coram's body, his mind is still that of a young man's. This offers the reader another way to judge a character based on their dæmon and its characteristics. Importantly, Farder Coram treats Lyra with the respect that the other adults aren't at this point. This will mean that Lyra is more willing to trust him and let him in on her thoughts, which opens her up to his mentorship and helps her learn how to behave as an adult.

Lyra begins to ask Farder Coram for help interpreting the symbols on the alethiometer. She explains how she asked the alethiometer a question about how Benjamin de Ruyter's mission is going. The needle stopped on a symbol that can mean death, but they wonder if Lyra is interpreting it correctly. A man knocks and asks Farder Coram to come quickly: Jacob Huismans, who was with Benjamin, returned and is seriously injured. Lyra follows Farder Coram to a boat. Jacob Huismans is sweaty with pain, but tells Farder Coram that Benjamin is dead. He explains that they broke into the Ministry of Theology. His dæmon takes up the tale and says that they captured three Gobblers, who suggested they find out more about the Ministry and Lord Boreal.

Jacob Huismans's story shows Lyra and Farder Coram that the alethiometer isn't something to mess with. It can and will tell the truth; it's up to the humans reading it to correctly interpret what it says. For Lyra in particular, this starts to teach her that she needs to trust the alethiometer to lead her in the right direction. Importantly, this both leads Lyra toward her destiny in the North and toward a more mature understanding of the world around her.

The dæmon says that their opponents seemed to know everything they were going to do. They all went to a side door and were ambushed in the dark once inside. The physician arrives, so Farder Coram pulls Lyra away. He tells her to occupy herself until later, when they need to talk about the alethiometer. She and Pan sit on a bank and Lyra thinks that she's afraid of her ability to read the alethiometer. They discuss that it might be a spirit that moves the needle, but Pan thinks it's elementary particles. Lyra recalls a holy object at Gabriel College, which has sails that spin when the light—and elementary particles—hit it. Tony interrupts Lyra and sends her to find John Faa and Farder Coram at the Zaal. John Faa says that Jacob Huismans has just died—and they need to take Lyra with them to the North.

The intersection of physical science and religion makes religion easier to see at work in the real world—and also means that controlling society through religion and the related sciences is even easier for the Magisterium. Rather than existing in writing, ritual, and the minds of believers, in Lyra's world, religion is something testable and observable to the masses in concrete ways that don't rely solely on having faith.

The next two weeks are difficult for Lyra. They're busy, but she has to remain hidden and being inside all the time is difficult. Tony Costa tells her about strange rumors that she escaped from the Gobblers, or that she and Pan are spirits or spies for the Tartars. Lyra longs to be free, and sometimes wishes she were back at Jordan College with Roger. She spends much of her time studying the alethiometer and finds that if she concentrates, she can read and interpret it. She tells Farder Coram that she just innately understands what the alethiometer is telling her. One day, he asks her to find out what Mrs. Coulter is doing. The long needle swings around and stops several times at a picture of a lizard-like creature that Lyra doesn't recognize.

The desire to return to Jordan College and have things be the way they once were is a perfectly normal desire for Lyra—and would be even if she hadn't been thrown into a journey like this. This reminds the reader that in many ways, Lyra is just a normal child going through the normal changes that all children do as they move toward adulthood—although in circumstances that are far from normal. Like all children, there are gaps in her knowledge, which can at times lead to disastrous consequences (as this gap will).

Lyra asks if she can go outside for a minute. Farder Coram decides that it won't hurt, so Lyra and Pan leap up. Pan turns into a seagull and plays in the wind and the water. Lyra shares in his joy even though she's cold. Suddenly, something small and black attacks Pan. A second attacker joins the first. The tillerman's cormorant dæmon rescues Pan, who falls into Lyra's arms, turns into a wildcat, and leaps on the fallen creature that attacked him. The second attacker escapes. Lyra puts a tin mug over the creature and she and Farder Coram take it below.

Being attacked like this reminds Lyra that she's both wanted and vulnerable, given her connections and the fact that she's a child. When Lyra shares how Pan is feeling as he plays, it suggests that a person needs fresh air and moments like this in order to feel whole and at peace—but also that these innocent moments can be the most dangerous.

Farder Coram dumps the creature into a glass. It looks like a large and furious beetle. Farder Coram explains that it's not a live creature: it's a bad spirit trapped in a clockwork body. He says they come from Morocco, and this one was certainly sent by Mrs. Coulter. Lyra realizes that the lizard symbol means air, and Farder Coram says the symbol is a chameleon, which lives on air. Lyra and Farder Coram stare at each other in awe, and Lyra says they should've listened to the alethiometer. They decide to shut the "spy-fly" in a tin.

Just as with Jacob Huismans, the spy-fly impresses upon Lyra and Farder Coram that they can and should rely on the alethiometer to tell them what to do and what's going to happen—and importantly, that they can't ignore something just because Lyra can't figure it out. However, learning that the chameleon can denote air will, going forward, allow Lyra to interpret the alethiometer better.

The boat reaches Colby and Lyra accompanies Farder Coram and the tillerman through the empty town to the docks. There they find Tony Costa, who quietly says that a gyptian man was killed. The ship to go north is huge. They climb up the gangway and head below to find John Faa and tell him about the flying spirit. He doesn't reprimand them for letting Lyra outside. Being the only female on the ship, Lyra gets her own cabin. Once she stows her things, she excitedly looks out the window to watch England disappear. She can't see through the heavy mist and soon, both she and Pan are seasick.

The dead gyptian again reinforces that the gyptians are in a vulnerable state because of the way that other people perceive them. Going north to rescue children and, in effect, going against the Magisterium means that they're becoming even more vulnerable. However, they are fighting for others and, morally speaking, are doing the right thing—their targeted identity just makes their mission harder to carry out.

CHAPTER TEN

John Faa decides that they'll head for Trollesund, the main port of Lapland. There's a witches' consulate there and they need the witches' help. On the second day of their journey, Farder Coram explains that he knows the witches in Lapland and they owe him a favor. Forty years ago, he saved a witch's life when he saw a huge red bird pursuing her. Upon getting the woman in his boat, he was shocked to see that she didn't have a dæmon. He explains that witches can separate themselves further from their dæmons than other people. Farder Coram suspects that the red bird he shot was another witch's dæmon. Regardless, she's helped him over the years and told him to ask for help from the consul.

Introducing the witches, and specifically that they can separate themselves from their dæmons, shows Lyra that there are more ways of being and having a soul than the way that she is familiar with. However, it's still possible to tell something about a being by the way their dæmon behaves: the fact that witches' dæmons can separate so far speaks to their transient and free nature, as well as their disconnect from human society.

The men turn to boring talk, so Lyra wanders away and pesters a sailor named Jerry. Jerry puts her to work scrubbing and cleaning, which helps with the seasickness. Lyra quickly decides that she wants to live on the water. Pan experiments with becoming a fish and swims with dolphins one afternoon. Lyra senses that he wants to speed farther away. She shares in his pleasure, but she's also pained and afraid that maybe, he'll decide to settle as a dolphin or leave her. Jerry sees Lyra's expression and says that when he first went to sea, his dæmon loved being a dolphin too. There was a man on that ship whose dæmon *was* a dolphin, and the man couldn't go ashore and was extremely unhappy until his death.

Lyra's fear that Pan might settle as a dolphin speaks to the fear of not knowing who or what she's going to be when she grows up. More so than other dæmon forms, a dolphin would mean that like the man that Jerry knew, Lyra wouldn't have as much mobility. However, it's also possible that Pan's happiness as a dolphin is real, but is just an experimental phase, just like a young person might like a certain kind of music or clothing style in the reader's world.

Lyra says she wants Pan to be able to change forever, but Jerry assures her that settling is part of growing up. He says that soon, Lyra will want Pan to settle, and that when Pan settles, Lyra will also know who she is. He says that his own seagull dæmon, who's tough, means that he's also tough. Lyra asks what happens when dæmons settle in a form their person doesn't like. Jerry says that this happens often, but people just have to come to terms with it. Lyra remains convinced that she'll never grow up.

Jerry crystallizes one of the key roles of a dæmon: dæmons are windows into a person's soul and their identity. People don't always grow up to be who they thought they'd be, Jerry suggests, but they still have to decide how they're going to live with their adult selves—and how they handle that and what they become is, possibly, more important than their dæmon's form.

One morning, Lyra wakes up and realizes that the ship is moving differently. She races to the deck and stares at the town until she gets too cold. An hour after they dock, Farder Coram leads Lyra off the ship to visit the witch consul. The consul, Dr. Lanselius, has a bright serpent dæmon. He notes the name of Farder Coram's witch friend, Serafina Pekkala, and listens to Farder Coram state the gyptians' business. Farder Coram asks if Dr. Lanselius knows about the Gobblers. Lyra watches as the men seem to play a game of withholding information. Finally, Dr. Lanselius says that Serafina Pekkala is the queen of a witch clan. He says that Farder Coram must keep it a secret that he shared the information about the Gobblers.

Seeing the way that Dr. Lanselius and Farder Coram interact shows Lyra that while she may want to be ready to enter the adult world of politics and posturing, she's not there yet. That Dr. Lanselius asks Farder Coram to not share what they discuss reminds the reader that the witches, and possibly Dr. Lanselius as an individual, have incentive to keep quiet about this sort of thing—the Magisterium in its power could make their lives miserable, even if what the Magisterium is doing is wrong.

Dr. Lanselius says that there's an organization in town that pretends to search for minerals, but is controlled by the General Oblation Board and imports children. They take the children inland, but he doesn't know where. He's not sure what they do to the children, but he's heard it referred to as the "Maystadt process" and "intercision." Dr. Lanselius says that a group of children left two days ago by sledge. Farder Coram asks if there's any other question he should be asking. With a smile, Dr. Lanselius says that Farder Coram should ask about engaging the services of an armored bear. He explains that there's one in town, Iorek Byrnison, who isn't employed by the Oblation Board. He advises that getting Iorek's help is extremely important.

Telling Farder Coram and Lyra the truth here allows Dr. Lanselius to align himself with the side of good, even if he must do so secretly. By doing this, he also positions himself in a place where he can continue to undermine the Magisterium, as, in theory at least, they'll have a hard time tracing this back to him. Suggesting that they employ Iorek may mean that Dr. Lanselius knows more than he's letting on about the dangers that the gyptians are going to face.

Then, Dr. Lanselius turns to Lyra and asks her about the alethiometer. She allows him to see it, but Farder Coram interrupts and says that Lyra can't read it. Lyra notices that Dr. Lanselius's dæmon is agitated, and she chooses to tell the truth. Dr. Lanselius tells her about the alethiometer's origins and where the symbols came from. Lyra explains how she relaxes her mind to read it and agrees to demonstrate. At Dr. Lanselius's request, she asks what the Tartars intend to do at Kamchatka. The answer comes to Lyra and she explains how she interpreted the needle's movements. Dr. Lanselius gives Farder Coram a strange look. He asks Lyra to go out to a shed full of cloud-pine sprays and figure out which one Serafina Pekkala used to fly. Lyra hurries outside.

The choice to tell the truth to Dr. Lanselius represents a major leap for Lyra and her relationship to lying, as well as her new understanding that she can make choices about which adults she trusts. Telling the truth suggests that Lyra now knows that when she chooses to do so, good things might come of it. This suggests that as her relationship to the alethiometer deepens, Lyra will get more comfortable with the truth in general and begin to understand how to use it to get what she wants and needs.

Farder Coram and Dr. Lanselius watch as Lyra correctly identifies the right spray. She then holds the cloud-pine above her head and pretends to fly. Dr. Lanselius says that the witches have been talking about Lyra for centuries. The witches hear "immortal whispers" from other worlds, and Lyra is supposed to fulfill her destiny in a different world—or else everyone will die. Further, she must do this without knowing what she's doing. Farder Coram tries to ask questions, but Lyra bursts in with the cloud-pine. Dr. Lanselius gives her a twig as a memento and wishes his guests luck. Farder Coram touches the cloud-pine and Lyra notices a look of longing on his face.

When Dr. Lanselius corroborates the Master's insistence that Lyra's journey was foretold, it solidifies the idea that destiny exists in Lyra's world. Again, noticing the look of longing on Farder Coram's face shows Lyra beginning to observe how people aside from herself engage with and interpret the world. Moving outside her childish selfishness allows her to experience flashes of maturity.

As Lyra and Farder Coram walk, Lyra says that the alethiometer told her that Dr. Lanselius knew the answer to his question already. They head to the depot to track down Iorek Byrnison and when they learn that he'll be off duty at six p.m., they purchase warm clothing for Lyra. Back at the ship, they reconnect with John Faa and share what they learned. John Faa says that he engaged the help of a balloonist.

When Lyra admits that she knew that Dr. Lanselius already knew the answer, it shows that she hasn't transformed into someone who's entirely truthful—to a degree, she still lied by admission. It's unclear if Dr. Lanselius would know this, however, which leaves room for Lyra to use lying by omission for good in the future.

That evening, Lyra and Farder Coram walk to the local bar. In the yard behind it, they find Iorek Byrnison drinking from a massive tankard and gnawing on a haunch of bloody meat. Farder Coram asks to speak to Iorek, and when the bear looks in their direction, Lyra feels uncomfortable. The bear isn't human, as he doesn't have a dæmon, and she both pities and admires him. Iorek stands up to his full height and rejects their offer of employment. He drinks from his tankard and then asks what the work is. Farder Coram briefly explains their mission and asks what Iorek is paid here—the answer is meat and alcohol. After a silence, Farder Coram asks why Iorek is working here when he could be free on the ice or winning wars. Lyra thinks that the question sounds insulting.

Note the fact that Lyra believes that Iorek isn't human just because he doesn't have a dæmon. This shows that Lyra's conception of what it means to be alive is, at this point, relatively narrow—a being must have a soul that she recognizes as a soul; speaking English and living in the human world isn't enough. Despite this, it's important to note that Lyra still feels like they should be very respectful of Iorek and that she takes offense to Farder Coram's questioning. She's beginning to believe, like the gyptians, that being different doesn't mean one no longer deserves kindness and respect.

Iorek comes close to the gate and says that he knows the gyptians are looking for the children and the "child cutters." Because Iorek doesn't like the child cutters, he says that he'll answer Farder Coram politely. He explains that the townspeople tricked him by getting him drunk and took his armor away. Without his armor, he can't go to war as he's meant to do. He says that he'll help the gyptians if they can get him his armor.

Lyra will later learn that a bear's armor contains his soul, which explains why he's so scary for her at this point: he truly is soulless and cannot be the being that he's supposed to be. In other words, Lyra is onto something when she thinks that Iorek isn't human, as he is indeed without a soul or a purpose.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Back at the ship, Lyra consults the alethiometer and figures out where Iorek's armor is and why it will be difficult to retrieve. She decides to let John Faa ask if he needs her help and falls asleep thinking of how different Iorek is from humans. Lyra wakes in the middle of the night, puts on her new furs, and climbs onto the deck. There, she clutches the railing in awe of the beautiful Aurora (the northern lights). It looks like both Heaven and Hell, and Lyra thinks that it seems almost holy. She thinks that it might be Dust, but then promptly forgets the thought. A city then appears in the sky—but as Lyra watches, something flies toward her. When the gray goose lands on the ship, the city disappears.

Lyra's interpretation of the Aurora, specifically the note that it looks like Heaven and Hell, speaks to how entrenched religion is in Lyra's world. It doesn't matter that Lyra isn't especially interested in religious matters; she still draws on the imagery and the language of religion in order to make sense of the world around her. To a degree, this speaks to the hold that the Magisterium has over society.

The goose is clearly a dæmon. He asks for Farder Coram and Lyra stumbles over herself to comply. She's fascinated and terrified. Farder Coram and John Faa join her on the deck and Farder Coram calls the goose Kaisa. Kaisa looks at Lyra, says he knows who she is, and asks if the gyptians are here to fight. Farder Coram says they're here to rescue children and need the witches' help, but Kaisa says that some clans are working with the "Dust hunters." He doesn't know if the Dust hunters and the Oblation Board are the same, but they arrived ten years ago to study Dust. Kaisa explains that Dust comes from the sky and inspires fear in humans who know about it. He came to show Farder Coram how to get to Bolvanger, where the Dust hunters are set up.

Just as with Iorek, Kaisa represents an entirely different way of being, since he's essentially an independent soul. However, he can still be read as a reflection of his person, the witch Serafina Pekkala. He indicates that the witches, being so different from humans, have different ways of thinking about Dust and the risk it might pose to their world, and he shows that he and Serafina are wise and want to help.

Kaisa explains that they don't know what the Dust hunters do at Bolvanger, but it emanates hatred and fear. The Dust hunters have a group of armed Tartars and a wire fence. Lyra asks why the witches know about her. Kaisa says that it's because of Lord Asriel and what he knows about the other worlds. Lyra asks if he means the city in the Aurora, and Kaisa confirms this. He says that the witches have known about the other worlds for millennia. They're easier to see in the Aurora because of the way the particles make this world thin. He's not sure if it has to do with Dust, but the Dust hunters are afraid of Lord Asriel's goal of building a bridge between the worlds. This is why the Magisterium orchestrated the crowning of the current bear king to keep Lord Asriel captive.

That the witches have known about the city in the Aurora for so long makes it clear that they exist outside the jurisdiction of the Magisterium. Remember that the Master said that the Magisterium silenced Barnard and Stokes, who proposed that there were other universes. This shows that the Magisterium will do anything, even if it's questionable, in order to not have to deal with information that might threaten what it teaches and how it controls society.

Lyra asks which side the witches are on. Kaisa says that it's complicated, as the witches are divided and there would be a huge advantage to whoever possessed the bridge to the other worlds. Lyra asks where the bears' allegiances lie, and Kaisa says that they normally don't care about human problems, but their new king is changing things. Regardless, the bears will hold Lord Asriel until they all die. At this, Lyra cries out that Iorek isn't like that and is going to help them. Farder Coram uncomfortably tells Lyra that this isn't true; Iorek is an indentured laborer and dangerous. Lyra says that the alethiometer told her something different. Farder Coram says that the townspeople only haven't killed Iorek as punishment for killing people because they need him to work metal. Lyra promises to keep Iorek from hurting anyone.

In this moment, Lyra shows that she now trusts the alethiometer completely and will use it to decide which adults she can trust and which she can't (in this case, the townsfolk who are lying about Iorek). Lyra's defense of Iorek positions children in general as some of the best defenders of the truth and of doing the right thing, even when it's difficult. Notably, she can champion Iorek like this because she's a child and isn't interested in learning about the political intricacies involved in why he's an indentured laborer here in the first place.

Everyone turns to Kaisa, who says that the witches are interested in Lyra in part because of the alethiometer. Farder Coram suggests that they trust Lyra and Iorek, and they ask Kaisa for his opinion. Kaisa says that they'll need to make their own choices, but an outcast bear may be less reliable. Then, he tells them how to reach Bolvanger. Lyra sits back and thinks of a bridge between two worlds, her brilliant father, and she vows to take him the alethiometer and free him from the bears.

The possibility of other worlds is so appealing for Lyra in part because of her age: as a child approaching puberty, rebellion is normal, and the fact that the existence of these other worlds goes against Magisterium teachings makes them a prime target for youthful rebellion.

Lyra wakes up after noon and finds the rest of the gyptians mostly ready to go. She joins Tony Costa and his friends in a cafe and tells him all about Iorek. A tall lean man with a hare dæmon sits down, introduces himself as Lee Scoresby, the balloonist, and says that he knows Iorek. He invites the gyptians to play cards with him while his dæmon motions to Pan. The hare tells Pan to go to Iorek immediately: as soon as the town figures out what's going on, they'll move his armor. Lyra and Pan leave immediately for Iorek's workplace. They stand far away and Lyra watches the bear dismantle a crushed tractor. Iorek notices Lyra and as he looks at her, Lyra feels terrified and decides to not speak to him.

Scoresby's behavior suggests that the alethiometer is right and the townsfolk have treated Iorek poorly. Standing up for Iorek now shows that Scoresby is a good and loyal friend who's willing to do what's right. At this point in her life, Lyra craves experiences that are different than what she knows, but Iorek represents a kind of difference that's scary and, to a degree, threatening. Being without a dæmon and therefore, without his soul means that he's fundamentally different and unknowable as far as Lyra's concerned.

Pan, however, says that *he'll* talk to Iorek. He flies as a bird over the chain link fence, but Lyra doesn't follow. He turns into a badger. Dæmons can't get more than a few yards from their person, so Lyra knows he's going to pull her. As they draw apart, Lyra's chest aches with sadness, love, and physical pain. Lyra sobs and races through the gate to Pan. Iorek watches as Lyra and Pan comfort each other and then turn to him. Lyra thinks he looks so alone. She tells him that she knows where his armor is.

Pulling Lyra like this shows that in this world, the kind of dissonance and uncertainty that Lyra feels has a physical cause: her soul pulling her one way, when she wants to go the other. That Pan ultimately wins out and also represents Lyra's conscience suggests that he's intent on pushing Lyra toward doing the right thing and is willing to be uncomfortable to do so.

Lyra asks why Iorek doesn't make more armor. He shows her how weak normal metal is. He explains that his armor is made of "sky iron," and says this it's his soul, just like a dæmon is a human's soul. Making new armor out of normal metal would be like replacing Pan with a stuffed animal. Lyra makes Iorek promise to not hurt anyone out of vengeance and tells him his armor is in the priest's house. The priest has been trying to exorcise a spirit out of it. Iorek tells Lyra he owes her a debt and pads away. Lyra follows and watches the sentries in town realize what's happening. Lyra reaches the house to see the front door torn off. A sentry enters and the house seems to shake as Iorek bursts through a ground-level window. In his armor, he's terrifying.

The fact that the priest has tried to exorcise Iorek's armor and that Iorek confirms it's his soul impresses upon Lyra that Iorek is different from her, but not for the reason she initially thought. He's different because he doesn't have his soul with him, not because he doesn't have a dæmon. Learning this allows Lyra to form a more nuanced view of the world and the beings in it which, in turn, will allow her to be more forgiving, curious, and understanding when she meets others who are different.

The policemen and the sentry shoot at Iorek, but he brushes off the bullets and grabs the sentry's head in his jaws. Lyra darts forward and touches the only fur she can see through his armor. She fiercely reminds the bear that he owes her and that he promised to not hurt these men. Iorek slowly drops the man and follows Lyra to the harbor. There, Iorek pulls off his armor and slips into the water as the gyptians watch. Lyra tells Tony Costa what happened as a crowd begins to gather. She turns back to Iorek's armor to find Lee Scoresby sitting on top of it with a long pistol. He reprimands the townsfolk for how they treated Iorek, as Iorek returns with a seal he's caught. The bear then carefully packs seal blubber into the joints of his armor.

Lyra's fearlessness when it comes to Iorek stems from her growing understanding of right and wrong. She knows that insisting that Iorek keep his word is more important than worrying about whether or not he might accidentally kill her, so it's not something that she even bothers to think about. She could also act this way because of her youth, as she doesn't yet fully grasp all the things that could threaten her life.

John Faa and Farder Coram, along with the town's "sysselman" (the head of the local government), arrive. The sysselman warns Iorek that if he returns they'll be merciless, but Iorek ignores him. The townsfolk wander away and Lyra realizes that Iorek was right: the armor *is* his soul; he cares for it like she cares for Pan. John Faa calls everyone to prepare to leave and in a half an hour, they leave the town. Lyra falls asleep. Pan decides to tell her later that a monkey-like figure is following them.

Seeing what is presumably the golden monkey indicates that Mrs. Coulter is either nearby, or that the golden monkey can stray surprisingly far from Mrs. Coulter for not being a witch. This makes it seem as though there's something uncanny about Mrs. Coulter and that possibly, she's not entirely human in some way.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The party stops after several hours to eat and rest. John Faa asks Lyra to ask the alethiometer about how Bolvanger is protected. She says that it's just like Kaisa said, but the alethiometer is also telling her about a nearby village with a troublesome ghost. John Faa isn't interested in the ghost and asks more questions about the Tartars guarding Bolvanger. They all have wolf dæmons. This disturbs him. Lyra impatiently says that the ghost might be from one of the captured children, but when nobody listens, she approaches Iorek. He says that the village is too far away for Lyra, but it's not far for him. Lyra explains that the alethiometer is telling her she has to go there in order to figure out what the Gobblers are doing. Iorek says that if John Faa agrees, he can take Lyra there.

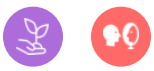
Now that the alethiometer has proven itself to Lyra on a number of occasions, she knows that it's silly to ignore what it's telling her to do. It's worth noting that in this situation, the alethiometer is also telling her about this "ghost" of its own volition; it's not something that Lyra asked about. This suggests that the alethiometer may have independent motives and a conscience of its own in some capacity. Though its instructions don't make sense right now, they will later—which speaks to the way in which destiny often doesn't make sense until after the fact.

Lyra asks John Faa if she and Iorek can go. She reminds him and Farder Coram about what happened when she couldn't interpret the chameleon, and says that this is the same thing. Lee Scoresby vouches for Iorek and finally, John Faa agrees. Lyra climbs onto Iorek's back and they lope away through the moonlight. Lyra wants to talk, but she thinks that Iorek is cold and strange. She thinks that she probably looks like a baby to him, which is an uncomfortable thought. After an hour, Iorek stops and tells Lyra to look up. Hundreds of witches are flying north. Iorek says that John Faa should know about this.

Realizing that she must look young to Iorek again shows that Lyra is beginning to come of age and be more aware of how she exists in the world. That Iorek takes note of the witches and says that they need to pass this information on to John Faa shows that he's not just in this to provide brute strength. He also wants to gain information to make it easier for his side to win, and he's going to throw his entire self into the endeavor.

Lyra and Iorek stop when they can see the village. Lyra says that there's something uncanny about the ghost or the child in the village, but she's not sure what they'll find. She quiets her fear by reminding herself that Lord Asriel is her father and that she commands a bear. In the middle of the village, a man steps out with a rifle. He and Iorek speak in a strange language, and Iorek translates that the man thinks he and Lyra are devils. She asks him to say that they're looking for a strange child, and the man immediately points and asks Iorek to take the scary child away. The man runs back inside and Iorek leads Lyra to the fish house.

The fear that the villager expresses indicates that whatever this ghost or child is, it's something that's inhuman to the point of being terrifying and undeniably different. That Lyra can calm herself down by reminding herself of her relationship to Lord Asriel shows again how much she idolizes him, something that ultimately keeps her from seeing that he's not someone she should trust.



Lyra is terrified, but she tugs the door open. Pan runs around as a white ermine, beside himself, and won't speak to Lyra or look inside the building. Lyra tries to be brave and enter, but Pan jumps at her and tells her to leave. An old man appears with a lantern and tells Iorek that he's seen children like this in the forest. Most die, and it's a mercy when they do. He gives Lyra the lantern and runs away. Lyra steps in and sees that the boy inside is clutching a fish to his heart like he'd clutch a dæmon. He has no dæmon; "intercision" means cutting a child's dæmon away.

Given the parameters of how the novel defines being human, this child isn't *human: he has no soul. This tells Lyra that the people in charge of Bolvanger are experimenting with creating beings that are just as unhappy and unmoored as Iorek was before he got his armor back. The boy's appearance suggests that intercision is, in many ways, worse for humans than being without armor was for Iorek.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Lyra feels ill and afraid; a human without a dæmon is unnatural and horrid. The boy introduces himself as Tony Makarios and asks for Ratter. Lyra and Pan rush outside and sit in the snow for a minute to collect themselves. Then, Lyra calls for Tony to come out. He follows Lyra and shows no fear or emotion when he sees Iorek. He continues to ask for Ratter. The villager asks Iorek to pay for Tony's fish, but Lyra refuses. Lyra helps Tony onto Iorek and scrambles up behind him. Pan huddles in Lyra's hood, sad and wishing he could cuddle Tony.

As far as Lyra can see, letting Tony leave with the fish is a small kindness that will have a big impact on his quality of life, grim as it may be. The villager's insistence that Lyra pay for the fish appears heartless and makes the villagers seem cruel and unfeeling. Tony's behavior shows that losing one's soul makes a person blank and unresponsive, robbing them of all personality.

When they catch up with the gyptians, the men fall back in horror at the sight of Tony Makarios. Lyra explains that the Gobblers cut children's dæmons away. Iorek reprimands the men for shying away from Tony. The men build up the fire and warm soup. Lyra starts to fall asleep before she can mention the witches, so she asks Iorek to tell John Faa and thanks him for helping her. When Lyra wakes up, Farder Coram approaches. Lyra begins to tell him how she misinterpreted the alethiometer's reading about Tony, but Farder Coram says that Tony died an hour ago. The ground is too hard for a grave, so they're going to cremate him. He praises Lyra for saving him.

Here, Iorek shows that he might be terrifying, but he also has a heart and understands the importance of compassion. This suggests that while Iorek's soul may differ in significant ways from a human soul, morality and a sense of right, wrong, and kindness are things that transcend differences—and that kindness is something that everyone deserves, whether they have a soul or not.

Lyra asks to see Tony Makarios's body. He looks like any other human in death. She hugs Pan and thinks of Tony's fish. She pulls the blanket down and sees that his fish is gone. Lyra turns on the men and asks where his fish went. Some start to laugh, but one man explains that he fed it to his dog, thinking that Tony was just eating it. Lyra fishes for a coin in her pocket and borrows the man's knife. She carves Ratter's name into the coin, just like the Jordan Scholars, and puts the coin in Tony's mouth.

Given that humans' dæmons disappear when their person dies, Tony truly is just like anyone else in death. Lyra's willingness to reprimand the men for taking Tony's fish shows that she's continuing to hone her sense of what's right and what's wrong, and at this point, she's finding that she comes down most often on the side of compassion and kindness.

Back at the fire, Lyra sips soup and she and Farder Coram discuss the witches and where they might've been going. They all stand respectfully while Tony Makarios's body is cremated, and then they head north. During one stop, Lyra asks Farder Coram about the clockwork fly-spy and where it is. When he's not looking, she snatches the tin out of his bag and asks Iorek to help her create a decoy tin to leave with Farder Coram, as well as another larger tin to put the fly-spy in. She sits with the bear and asks Iorek if he's lonely without a dæmon. He says he doesn't know what lonely means, just like he doesn't feel cold. He says that bears are solitary creatures.

This conversation with Iorek allows Lyra to flesh out her understanding of souls and difference even more. That Lyra and Iorek are being so truthful with each other and forming this bond indicates that it's possible to become friends with someone whose soul is completely different; both parties just need to be willing to be kind, curious, and open to learning.

Lyra asks about the Svalbard bears, which live together. Iorek doesn't respond, and Lyra apologizes for offending him. She explains that Lord Asriel is a captive on Svalbard and Iorek claims to know nothing, as he's no longer a Svalbard bear: he killed another bear and has been sent away and deprived of his wealth and armor as punishment. Lyra is awed, as this is also what happened to Lord Asriel. The two discuss Svalbard's geography, and then Lyra asks where Iorek got this set of armor. He explains that he made it himself from sky metal. Lyra is impressed that bears can make their own souls.

While it may be more obvious that bears can shape their souls when they create their armor, it's worth keeping in mind that Lyra isn't giving herself quite enough credit for the role she plays in shaping her identity and how Pan conducts himself. Pan reflects Lyra and behaves the way she does to balance out her curiosity and love of mischief. In this way, she can still shape Pan and her soul, just not in such a tangible way.

They discuss the king of the bears and Iorek says that the king's name is Iofur Raknison. Lyra remembers that she heard the name in the Retiring Room. She tries to remember what the Palmerian Professor said about Iofur. Iorek says that if the bears have Lord Asriel, he's never getting out. Lyra asks if the bears could be tricked. Iorek shows Lyra his claws and says that bears can't be tricked. He proves this by inviting Lyra to fence with him. Lyra jabs at him with a stick, cautiously and then furiously. Iorek blocks every attempt, and explains that he can do this because he's not human: bears can see through tricks. He says it's similar to how Lyra can interpret the alethiometer as a child, while adults can't. Puzzled, Lyra wonders if she'll stop being able to read it when she grows up.

It's worth keeping in mind that while Iorek insists that he's not a Svalbard bear, he's still a bear and proud of his identity. This will be important later, especially given these attributes that he ties to bears and to no other beings. The possibility that Lyra might lose the ability to interpret the alethiometer as an adult suggests that even though adulthood may be linked to experience and understanding, humans still lose something—in this case, an innate ability to pinpoint the truth—when they become adults.

At the next stopping point, Lee Scoresby plans to take his balloon up and spy from the air. They forbid Lyra from joining him, but she pesters him with questions about Svalbard, what would happen if Iorek wanted to go back, and how to inflate a balloon. Lyra also asks about the Tartars and the holes they drill in their skulls. Scoresby explains that the Tartars do it to each other so they can talk to the gods. Lyra asks if Scoresby knew Grumman, and says that she saw his head. Scoresby says that since Grumman was an honorary Tartar, the Tartars must not have scalped him. Scoresby suggests that the head that Lord Asriel showed wasn't Grumman's head at all.

While Lyra doesn't seem to take it this way, it's worth considering the possibility that, given what Scoresby says about Grumman, Lord Asriel lied on purpose. Again, though it's possible that he has good reasons for doing so that would make his lies look acceptable in the long run, at this point it's impossible to say—and to the reader, who should suspect Lord Asriel more than Lyra does, this creates more questions about Lord Asriel's character than Lyra might like.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The expedition stops to fill Lee Scoresby's balloon, but then a mist descends. Suddenly, men start to fall as arrows strike them. Pan knocks Lyra to the ground and Iorek leaps at their attackers. A man hauls Lyra to her feet, ties her up, and throws her onto a sledge. She screams for Iorek, but her captor covers her mouth with a dirty cloth. Pan says that their captors look like Tartars. Lyra knows that these people are taking them to the Gobblers, and she and Pan assure each other that they'll fight to stay together.

The way that Pan and Lyra comfort each other offers insight into what the novel suggests is one of the perks of having a soul: a person is never alone and always has someone on their side. Tony Makarios was so lost in part because, for the first time in his life, he was entirely alone. With this, the novel suggests that one's inner voice, as represented by the dæmons, is absolutely necessary to live.

After riding in the sledge for hours, Lyra's captor lets her sit and asks for her name. Realizing that he doesn't know who she is, Lyra says her name is Lizzie and that the gyptians she was with are traders. She wonders if John Faa will be able to rescue her. Carefully, she hides the spy-fly tin in her boot and checks that she still has the alethiometer. Lyra falls asleep and wakes up when she realizes that there are bright lights above her. The sledge halts outside of a building and a man who looks like he could be from Jordan comes outside. The man asks Lyra if Pan always takes the same shape. She gapes in surprise, and Pan turns into a falcon and pesters the man's dæmon. Satisfied, the man pays Lyra's captors and leads her inside.

It's telling that Lyra loses any capacity to consider the situation and lie when the man asks if Pan can change shape. She might not know it now, but it's possible that lying here would keep her safe, because if Pan had already settled, he and Lyra would be past the point of interest for the Oblation Board. This indicates that this is entirely new territory for Lyra, and shows that she's going to have to become more adaptable going forward if she wants to be able to use her lies to protect herself.

Lyra decides to pretend that she's unintelligent. Inside, it looks like a hospital. The man asks a nurse named Sister Clara to deal with Lyra. Sister Clara leads Lyra down a hallway, and she seems blank and sensible. Her white terrier dæmon, however, chills Lyra for some reason. They enter a small room where Lyra nervously undresses and Sister Clara herself unties the belt containing the alethiometer. She thinks it's a toy and assures Lyra that they won't take it away. Lyra showers, submits to an exam, and receives pajamas. Sister Clara brushes off Lyra's questions but gives her the alethiometer and asks her to pick a doll from a drawer. While Sister Clara is occupied, Lyra sneaks the spy-fly tin out of her boot.

Given what the reader and Lyra know about intercision and what happens at Bolvanger, the doll may be an attempt to wean children away from their dæmons before undergoing the procedure. Remember, however, that even Iorek knew that replacing a dæmon (or a soul in general) with a facsimile like this was a futile endeavor. Interestingly, Sister Clara blank dæmon looks somewhat like a doll too given its lack of curiosity, which suggests that they may have undergone intercision.

Sister Clara leads Lyra to the cafeteria and a man gives her a tray with food. When she's done eating, the man asks Lyra where she came from. His dæmon isn't as incurious as Sister Clara's, so Lyra avoids her gaze. Lyra tells him that she came north with her father, a trader, and says that the huntsmen who brought her here shot at her father's group. The man tells Lyra that this memory is just a trick of the cold. Exhausted, Lyra falls asleep in the dormitory.

The way that the man speaks to Lyra and tries to tell her that she doesn't actually remember what happened reminds the reader again that children in general are vulnerable, while the ones at Bolvanger are even more so: a less alert child than Lyra might buy this if they felt that adults were generally trustworthy.

Many girls shake Lyra awake and whisper. One says that they gave Lyra sleeping pills. The girls can't tell Lyra definitively what the adults do here, though one says that they measure Dust. Eventually, they take kids away one by one and they don't come back. The girls say it's boring except for when Mrs. Coulter comes. Lyra chokes back a shriek and the girls explain that Mrs. Coulter is the Gobbler who trapped most of them. She apparently likes watching what happens when the adults take kids away. One girl says that they measure dæmons and Dust. No Dust is good, but everyone gets Dust at some point. The girls say that Mrs. Coulter is coming in two days. Lyra decides that she has to find Roger and escape.

The way that the girls talk about what happens at Bolvanger shows again how vulnerable the children are. They do have the right idea about what happens, but being children, it's easy for the adults to keep information from them that would allow the children to effectively fight back against what happens here. The reappearance of Mrs. Coulter is a reminder that the Magisterium is everywhere and can seemingly control everything, no matter how remote a place might be.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Lyra, being practical and rather unimaginative, doesn't worry too much about the gyptians, and instead believes that they and Iorek will save her. At breakfast, she finds Roger. Pan provokes a scuffle with Roger's dæmon so they can speak and Roger turns white as a sheet. Lyra pretends to be disdainful of him and joins her new girl friends. She participates in the morning activities and then at snack time, Pan and Roger's dæmon quietly converse on the wall while Roger and Lyra sit with their different groups. Lyra snaps to attention when one girl at her table mentions Tony Makarios. She says that they took Tony because his dæmon didn't change much.

In this situation, Lyra can pretend to be a girl stereotypically disinterested in boys, while Pan—her soul—can express her true feelings about what's going on. Having this duality gives both Lyra and Roger the freedom to more easily maintain the illusion that they don't know each other. The girl's mention of Tony Makarios confirms that puberty and the time when dæmons begin to settle is what's of interest here.

Lyra asks why the adults are so interested in dæmons. One boy says that they kill kids' dæmons and see if the kids die, but the girl says that she heard what they do when the adults took Tony Makarios. She'd been in the linen closet with him when a nurse came and said that they were going to put him to sleep for a "little cut." The nurse explained that Ratter would go to sleep too, and that it wouldn't hurt—the cut was to make him more grown up. The nurse said that all adults have had the cut; that's why their dæmons don't change shape. The kids stop talking as Sister Clara appears in the doorway and calls for one of the girls. Nobody looks at her as they go to a gym to play.

The implication here is that Tony Makarios and this girl were experimenting sexually in the linen closet, something that would indicate that puberty is approaching for both of them. Sister Clara's insistence that all adults have had this cut (presumably, intercision) is, of course, a lie. In this situation, she's attempting to do what the man did with Lyra in telling her that the Tartars didn't attack her. Tony certainly knows that dæmons settle of their own accord; this is an attempt to change what he knows is true.

At lunchtime, Lyra turns around to find Billy Costa. She tells him that the gyptians are coming and to call her Lizzie. He sits with her, Roger nearby, and tells her everything he knows. Billy says that after the operation, kids go south to hostels. Roger points out a hiding place he found in the ceiling tile. Lyra realizes that getting into the ceiling probably means she can get anywhere in the building. A doctor calls the children to attention and announces that they're going to conduct a fire drill later.

While the adults in charge may say that children go to hostels post-operation, what the villager said about finding them in the woods suggests that this is a lie meant to comfort the children and that the reality is infinitely crueler. The possibility that Bolvanger just leaves children in the wilderness drives home that they don't see their test subjects as real people worthy of care and comfort.

After lunch, the doctors test Lyra for Dust. She continues to play dumb and says she's not dusty. During one test, Lyra tests her luck and asks why they cut people's dæmons away. The doctor is agitated, but Lyra says that the kids gossip and believe that the adults kill them. The doctor assures Lyra that this isn't the case and then confers with the nurse. Both adults' dæmons look languid and incurious. During one test, the bell rings for the fire drill. The doctor is annoyed, but Lyra helpfully says that the outdoor clothes she came with are in the next room.

The doctor's reaction to Lyra's question shows that Bolvanger operates because they can, for the most part, keep the children from figuring out what's going on. Finding a child who knows what happens would suggest to them that there's been a major breach of protocol, which in turn might clue them in on the fact that they're losing control over their test subjects.

Outside, the adults barely have control. Lyra finds Billy and Roger and when nobody is looking, hurls a snowball at the crowd. The other children begin a wild snowball fight and in the mayhem, Lyra and her friends sneak away. They find a low building separate from the main building with "ENTRY STRICTLY FORBIDDEN" written on it. Roger squeals in surprise as Kaisa swoops down and explains that the gyptians are fine and on their way. Lyra sends Billy and Roger to keep watch and then tells Kaisa that the adults are cutting children's dæmons away from them. She thinks there's something in the building. Kaisa unlocks the door. Inside, Lyra finds the ghostlike dæmons of the severed children in cages. She covers Pan's eyes.

The adults' struggle to gain control over the children makes it clear that they're not people who really know how to deal with children; they're likely just scientists whose work now happens to require children. This gives Lyra an advantage, as she's far better at convincing other children to do what she wants than these adults are. Finding the severed dæmons in this building shows Lyra again that what happens at Bolvanger is cruel and unfeeling: the dæmons are just as vulnerable as their children and suffer just as much.

Lyra tells Kaisa about finding Tony Makarios and notices an empty cage with his name on it. She declares that she's going to break open the cages, but Kaisa says they need to make it look like someone forgot to lock them. He instructs Lyra to blow snow on each cage and magically unlocks them. The freed dæmons are scared, and pull pitifully at Lyra's pants. Kaisa instructs Lyra to run back to the other children; he's going to try to reunite the dæmons with their children. He says that this is the most evil thing he's ever seen. Lyra tries to ask questions about Serafina Pekkala and the witches, but Kaisa sends her away. Roger sees the dæmons and watches with horror.

Kaisa's authoritative assessment of the situation makes it clear that depriving a person of their soul is the cruelest thing someone can do to another, no matter what race a being might be. Having Kaisa around to help free the dæmons means that Lyra has a trustworthy adult presence to guide her when her emotions tell her to do something that would make her life more difficult. This shows again that as a child, Lyra still needs adult guidance.

Lyra, Roger, and Billy rejoin the group. Lyra asks them to pass around the message that the children need to be ready to escape when the fire bell rings next. It takes the adults a long time to take attendance, and Lyra notices that they're not good at keeping order. When the adults are almost done, she hears and sees a zeppelin landing nearby. As it descends, Lyra and Pan see Mrs. Coulter in one of the windows.

Again, making note of the fact that the Bolvanger adults aren't good at keeping kids in line gives Lyra ammunition that she'll need later. Mrs. Coulter's arrival means that there's now an urgency to the situation that there wasn't before, given how cruel she was and that she likes to watch what they do to the children.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Lyra focuses her attention on hiding her furs. Fortunately, getting the kids into the building is chaotic, so she's able to slip out of her furs and hide them in the ceiling of her dormitory. She hides the alethiometer with them. She and Pan decide to say that they were kidnapped, and Lyra realizes that she's afraid of Mrs. Coulter more than anything else. She focuses on the fact that the gyptians and Iorek are coming to save her. In the cafeteria, Lyra discovers that the other children are just as afraid of Mrs. Coulter as she is. Quietly, Lyra tells the children to be ready when the fire alarm goes off next.

Lyra's fear of Mrs. Coulter is, more broadly, representative of a fear of the establishment and its unchecked power. That all the children share this fear suggests that they all recognize how vulnerable they are to a system that doesn't care about them as people, and instead thinks of them only as disposable test subjects.

Mrs. Coulter passes by the door of the cafeteria and as she does, the children fearfully stop talking. A girl named Annie tells Lyra that Mrs. Coulter usually goes to the conference room. Later in the evening, Lyra realizes that the adults are acting like there's an emergency, and she figures that they discovered the escaped dæmons. In the dormitory before bed, Lyra tells her roommates that she's going into the ceiling to listen in on the conversation in the conference room. Annie insists on going too, but Pan overpowers her dæmon. The girls stuff clothes into Lyra's bed in case someone checks on them. Lyra and Pan make their way slowly around ducts and pipes, listening as they go. Finally, they reach the conference room.

That Lyra can pick up on the emergency that's bothering the adults suggests that though the adults here are trying to keep things secret from their captives, they're not very good at doing that either. This again gives Lyra an edge and suggests that there are a variety of ways that children can put the fact that they're children to good use—for instance, sneaking into the ceiling where an adult might not fit, or causing mayhem and testing the adults' ability to control a crowd.

Lyra listens to Mrs. Coulter interrogate three men about the dæmons' escape. A man explains that the alarm on the exterior building was linked to the fire alarm, so they missed it. They discuss that the dæmons escaped during the fire drill, which means that any adult or child could've done it. A doctor assures Mrs. Coulter that this is impossible. The conversation then turns to "the new separator." A doctor says that it's a real advancement and means that patients are less likely to die of shock. The “Maystadt anbaric scalpel” and Lord Asriel's discovery of an alloy that insulates the body from a dæmon make the procedure much better. Pan and Lyra tremble in fear.

Again, Lyra and the reader aren't supposed to fully understand what Mrs. Coulter and the doctors are talking about when it comes to the "separator," but the lack of information makes what Lyra does hear even more terrifying than it might be otherwise. Mentioning Lord Asriel opens up the possibility that he's somehow involved in this, which again should make Lyra question her father's goodness.

The doctor asks about Lord Asriel, and Mrs. Coulter says that since he continued his "heretical" work in Svalbard, he's too dangerous and has been sentenced to death. She asks again about the new scalpel. The doctor says that it's a guillotine of sorts, and they place a child and their dæmon in two compartments and sever the connection with the guillotine. Mrs. Coulter, pleased, excuses herself. The doctors talk quietly about Lord Asriel, what he's doing with his experiments on Dust, and Mrs. Coulter's cruel interest in seeing children and dæmons being ripped apart. Lyra involuntarily cries out and twitches, kicking a pipe. Before she can crawl away, a man pushes up the ceiling tile and wrestles her down. She struggles until she suddenly loses strength and sees that a man is holding Pan. Pan shakes in horror.

When the doctors confirm what the children already said about Mrs. Coulter's cruel interest in watching others experience pain, it makes it clear that this quality isn't something that's only apparent to Mrs. Coulter's victims; it's just the way she is. The fact that this doctor is willing to touch Pan shows that the cruelty of Bolvanger isn't unique to intercision; the children here are so unimportant to the doctors as people that it's somehow acceptable to treat them as less than human by handling their souls roughly and without respect.

The doctors deliberate and then decide to secretly perform intercision on Lyra and Pan to keep Lyra from talking. They carry her and Pan to a brightly lit room. Lyra screams and Pan escapes. He changes rapidly, fights the men and their dæmons, and leaps toward Lyra. The three men grab them and toss Lyra in one mesh cage and Pan in the other. The guillotine hangs between and above them. As it rises, Lyra hears Mrs. Coulter enter. When Mrs. Coulter sees Lyra, the golden monkey frees Pan from the cage. Pan clings to Lyra and Mrs. Coulter takes them to a bedroom.

The fact that Mrs. Coulter frees Lyra makes it very clear that even if she thinks that intercision is a good thing, it's still not ready to be used on children she actually cares about. This suggests to Lyra that she shouldn't take Mrs. Coulter at her word about anything, and only highlights Mrs. Coulter's cruelty.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Lyra trembles and moans as Pan presses himself into her bare chest. He notices the golden monkey quickly feel Lyra's body and discover the pouch on her waist. Mrs. Coulter offers Lyra tea, but Lyra begins to sob uncontrollably. While Mrs. Coulter comforts Lyra, Pan sniffs the drink and finds it innocuous. He thinks to Lyra that they must pretend in order to stay safe. Lyra answers Mrs. Coulter's questions and lies, saying that a couple kidnapped her from the party. She feels gradually stronger as she lies; it's something she knows how to do well. She accounts for her weeks with the gyptians, invents a stint as a maid at the bar in Trollesund, and hysterically asks why the doctors cut children from their dæmons.

It's unclear if the golden monkey is touching Lyra's skin (which would mean breaking the taboo) or not, but touching her is invasive regardless and drives home that although Mrs. Coulter might not be ready to let Lyra be a test subject, she's still more than willing to violate her privacy and treat her like an object or a pet. Lyra's sense of feeling stronger as she lies suggests that in a situation like this, when Lyra's wellbeing is on the line, lying isn't a morally reprehensible thing. Instead, it will let her get out of this alive. Further, it's something that she's good at and that feels comfortable for her, even in this otherwise strange and terrifying situation.

Lyra asks if it has to do with Dust and demands an answer. Mrs. Coulter says that Dust is bad and evil, and separating children keeps them safe from Dust. Remembering Tony Makarios, Lyra vomits. She says that if all adults have Dust it *must* be okay, and she points out that if Dust is so bad, Mrs. Coulter should've let them cut her. With a smile, Mrs. Coulter says the procedure isn't bad, and points out that the adults here have had their dæmons cut away. Lyra then understands the blankness of the nurses' dæmons. Mrs. Coulter goes on and says that after the cut, everything is peaceful. She says that during puberty, dæmons bring about "troublesome thoughts" that let Dust in. The operation means that one's dæmon becomes a wonderful pet. Lyra knows she's lying, and feels a flash of anger.

What Mrs. Coulter proposes is essentially that gaining experience by becoming an adult—and experiencing everything that comes with that, including the "troublesome thoughts" that are, presumably, a euphemism for sexual thoughts—isn't good at all. Instead, it seems as though Mrs. Coulter believes that a childish state of innocence is the best way to live. However, compare how Mrs. Coulter behaves to the way the intercised nurses behave. They're unfeeling and can't make their own decisions, which suggests that for an ambitious person, at least, Dust and experience are necessary.

Softly, Mrs. Coulter says that Lyra can sleep in here with her. The golden monkey paces, betraying Mrs. Coulter's impatience. Finally, Mrs. Coulter asks Lyra if the Master gave her an alethiometer. She says that it wasn't his to give, and that it shouldn't go to Lord Asriel. Lyra asks why, and Mrs. Coulter explains that Lord Asriel is doing evil and dangerous things. She unties the belt from Lyra's waist and pulls out the black pouch and then the tins. Lyra puts her feet on the floor as Mrs. Coulter, amused, opens the first tin and then the second. The spy-fly hurtles into the golden monkey's face, hurting him and Mrs. Coulter. Lyra and Pan race out of the room, set off the fire alarm, and set the kitchen on fire. Lyra grabs her furs and the alethiometer.

Telling Lyra that Lord Asriel shouldn't *get the alethiometer ensures that Lyra will believe even more strongly that Lord Asriel* should *get it, given her idolization of him and her fear of Mrs. Coulter. In this way, Mrs. Coulter is unwittingly helping Lyra fulfill her destiny by making it seem even more important that Lyra get to Lord Asriel. In the same vein, saying that Lord Asriel's work is evil and dangerous makes it more likely that Lyra will decide that it must be good, since she doesn't trust Mrs. Coulter's interpretation of anything at this point.*

Lyra and the children struggle to get out as the fire spreads. They manage to escape and find Roger. She tells him to tell the other children that the adults will cut their dæmons away—hoping to scare them into following her. They follow, but soon come face to face with the Tartar guards and their wolf dæmons. Lyra hesitates, but shouts at the children to throw snow at the Tartars' eyes. It works. The children run, but Lyra knows that the Tartars are preparing to shoot. They never do, however; arrows come from witches above. Children begin screaming as they catch sight of Iorek charging past them to crash into the Tartars.

Lyra demonstrates here that she's much better than the Bolvanger adults are at controlling a group of children. This offers another example that children can be powerful when they're given the right tools and the right situation. However, it's still important to note that the witches and Iorek ultimately save the children; they can't exist on their own without some degree of adult assistance.

The children excitedly follow Lyra away from Bolvanger. They're thrilled to be saved but disturbed when Lyra tells them about Tony Makarios and the ghostly dæmons. One child points back toward Bolvanger and Lyra sees Lee Scoresby's balloon, which he's inflating using the gas from the zeppelin. The children begin to shiver, so Pan bullies their dæmons into warming them. They trudge on, following Iorek's tracks. Lyra begins to hear and see strange things, and finally falls into John Faa's arms. She tells Farder Coram that Roger is coming and asks what the strange noise is. Suddenly, the golden monkey attacks Pan while Mrs. Coulter pulls Lyra onto a motorized sledge.

Now that Lyra has saved these children, they can presumably return home and broadcast what they've experienced in the north. This illustrates how something like the Magisterium can be taken down when individuals like Lyra speak out and spread the truth along secret channels, thereby sowing discord and distrust in the establishment.

Mrs. Coulter sets a group of Tartars on the gyptians and Lyra watches her wrestle with Roger. Suddenly, Iorek leaps into the fray and Lyra feels something pull her up. She grabs Roger and sees that witches are lifting her. She lands in Lee Scoresby's balloon and a moment later, Iorek crawls in. The balloon surges up through a cloud. When it rises above it, Lyra watches the Aurora ahead and the witches flying up from below. One beautiful witch flies up next to the balloon and says that she's Serafina Pekkala. Lyra realizes suddenly that Farder Coram loved the witch, and that it's breaking his heart to be so old when she's still so young and beautiful.

It's unclear here why Mrs. Coulter is trying to kidnap Roger specifically, especially since Lyra never shared with her that she knew Roger before. While this doesn't make sense now, it does later: Lyra needs to take Roger north to Lord Asriel in order to fulfill the prophecy, and Mrs. Coulter trying to kidnap him here ensures that Lyra takes special care of her friend. Realizing that Farder Coram's heart is breaking is another flash of maturity for Lyra.

Serafina Pekkala confirms that Lyra still has the alethiometer. Kaisa flies up and Serafina passes on that Bolvanger is in ruins, the children are safe, and Mrs. Coulter escaped. Lee Scoresby attaches a rope to his balloon, throws it to the witches, and six witches pull the balloon north. Roger and Iorek fall asleep. Serafina asks Lyra why she's going to Lord Asriel. Lyra incredulously says that she needs to take him the alethiometer. She amends this to say that they're going to try to rescue him, and asks why Serafina is asking. Serafina says that there are things she needs to tell Lyra after Lyra sleeps.

As far as Lyra is concerned, it's clear what she needs to do—but the fact that Serafina Pekkala is asking suggests that Lyra is, at least to a degree, misguided about what she's actually *supposed to do. Regardless, Lyra's desire to help and save Lord Asriel speaks to her growing sense of responsibility to the people she loves, while asking Serafina why she'd ask this question shows her becoming more mature and shrewd in gathering information.*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Lee Scoresby covers Lyra in furs and after a while, confirms that Lyra is very important. He asks Serafina Pekkala if there's going to be a battle and explains that he can't afford to fight without proper compensation. Serafina says that there will be some fighting, and points out that Scoresby has fought before. To this, Scoresby says that he knows that a war with the bears will be horrible and he wants to be prepared. Serafina says that all of them are engaged in a war and this won't change, no matter what happens on Svalbard. Scoresby says that he wants to have a choice in whether or not he fights.

Lee Scoresby shows here that he believes that in order to make a decision, he must be fully informed about it. In terms of ethics, Scoresby indicates that he sees an ethical fight as one in which the soldiers are fairly compensated for their work and the risk they're taking. By removing it from a wider context that takes the righteousness of the battle itself into account, Scoresby shows that he's somewhat selfish.

Serafina Pekkala suggests that they may mean different things when they talk about choice. She says that witches live hundreds of years and own nothing, while Scoresby needs money to care for his balloon. She says that witches don't consider money when deciding whether or not to fight a war, and it's impossible to insult a witch like one can insult a bear. Scoresby says that he really just wants to return to Texas, buy a farm, and never fly again.

Though she doesn't say it outright, Serafina Pekkala suggests that it's far more important to look at the bigger picture (which, as far as she's concerned, shouldn't include money) when deciding whether to fight or not. Money, she suggests, is a poor motivator: a person must be motivated by a desire to do the right thing.

Serafina Pekkala says that this whole thing also has to do with Iorek's argument with the king of the bears, which also involves Lyra. Scoresby suggests that this is unethical as well as unlikely: Lyra seems freer than anyone. Serafina says that they all have to act like they're *not* at the mercy of destiny in order to feel meaningful, and explains that Lyra is destined to put an end to destiny—but only if she feels as though she's not following destiny as she does so. They look at Lyra sleeping and Scoresby asks about Roger. Serafina says that Lyra has something valuable and Roger, led by fate, enticed Lyra north.

In this passage, Serafina Pekkala gets at the novel's main idea when it comes to destiny: that everyone in this world is at its mercy, but that it's important for everyone (not just Lyra) to feel as though they're acting of their own accord. This suggests that destiny and free will aren't actually opposites. Instead, though free will might be an illusion, it's nevertheless meaningful and helps people fulfill their destinies.

Serafina Pekkala explains that the witches believe that the things happening at Bolvanger are evil, so they've aligned themselves with Lyra and with the gyptians because of Farder Coram. Because of this, they're also connected to Lord Asriel. She promises to help Scoresby back to Trollesund if she can, but says that she has no idea what they'll find on Svalbard or what Lyra and Iorek will do. Scoresby asks which side of the war he's on, and they agree that they're both on Lyra's side. Scoresby checks his instruments and goes to sleep.

That both Serafina and Scoresby choose to align themselves with Lyra and against Bolvanger suggests that for them, the most important thing right now is making sure that people's souls remain intact. In addition to the larger political questions, their goal is to protect vulnerable children and ensure that those children can grow into adulthood. Further, they choose an allegiance to this particular *child (Lyra), essentially choosing friendship and personal loyalty over larger political machinations.*

Lyra wakes up to find everyone but Serafina Pekkala asleep. They discuss the plan for landing in Svalbard and Lyra asks what she's supposed to do with Lord Asriel and how she should act. Serafina explains that Lord Asriel needs to cross over to another world and needs something to help him. Lyra is certain he needs the alethiometer and suggests that she can help him, but Serafina cannot confirm this. After a few minutes, Lyra asks Serafina, who's wearing nothing but light silk, why she isn't cold. The witch explains that cold doesn't hurt witches and, since not bundling up means that they can feel the Aurora, the moonlight, and the stars, they don't.

When Serafina talks about all the things she can feel because she doesn't cover up against the cold, she makes the case that gaining experience is, for witches, not only necessary but entirely worth it—experience opens her up to a world of sensation that others never get to feel. This impresses upon Lyra that whenever she can without hurting herself, she should endeavor to feel and experience as much as possible.

Lyra asks how long witches live and mentions Farder Coram. Serafina Pekkala says that the oldest witch is almost a thousand years old and tells Lyra that there are only female witches. She says that men serve the witches and become their lovers or husbands, but the men die quickly. Witches bear their children and their sons, which are human, die. Eventually, witches' hearts break. Lyra asks if Serafina loves Farder Coram. The witch confirms that she does. She would've given up being a witch for him, she say. They had a son, who died in an epidemic, and soon after, Serafina became clan queen. She's helped Farder Coram several times since, but she hasn't seen him. Lyra insists that Serafina send Farder Coram a message.

Here, Serafina suggests that while it's important and extremely meaningful to make connections with beings who are different, as in a witch-human relationship, those connections can also be painful given the ways that beings differ from each other. This plants the seed in Lyra's mind that she should brace herself for heartache later when it comes to Iorek, though it also offers some hope that she and Iorek will be able to maintain a warm relationship even if things become difficult.

Lyra asks why humans have dæmons, but Serafina Pekkala says that nobody knows. Dæmons make them different from animals, and Lyra talks about how strange Iorek is but how amazing it is that he can create his soul. Serafina reveals that Iorek is a prince and, if he hadn't killed another bear, he'd be king of the bears. The current king, Iofur Raknison, is clever like a human and wishes to be a part of the human world. There are rumors that he tricked Iorek into killing the bear. Lyra points out that in theory, bears can't be tricked, and wonders if bears can trick bears. They discuss how the people in Trollesund tricked Iorek, and Serafina suggests that bears might be susceptible to tricks when they act like people.

The novel overwhelmingly shows that every different kind of being has its own quirks, flaws, and strong suits—and it suggests here that if a being chooses to give up on what it actually is, it might also forfeit all the things that would normally help it survive. This suggests that part of being alive in Lyra's world entails being at ease with one's self, something that Serafina suggests that Iofur Raknison is not.

Lyra asks what Dust is. Serafina Pekkala doesn't know, but says that priests and the Church fear Dust. Lyra remembers the Intercessor telling her at one point that religion and elementary particles are linked. Cold, Lyra covers herself in furs and falls asleep again. Serafina wakes Scoresby a while later. Something is wrong; the balloon swings wildly. Roger and Lyra wake up and comfort each other as the basket drops through fog. Suddenly, a leathery, winged creature crawls over the basket. Iorek knocks it off and says that it's a cliff-ghast. The balloon tips sideways and something rips. The basket jerks and Lyra flies out and lands in the snow.

Because the Church and the Magisterium are so powerful and far-reaching, they have the ability to finance crackdowns on the things they fear. This shows more broadly how governments or powerful religious institutions can harness fear for their own ends. The link between religion and elementary particles shows again that in Lyra's world, religious institutions can gain control by harnessing science and what scientific discoveries are published—similar to the earlier days of Christianity in Europe, when the Church controlled scientific data as well as religious dogma.

Lyra calls for Iorek and Roger, but no one answers. Pan checks the alethiometer and after a minute, they get up to try to find the balloon. They find sandbags that Scoresby must've thrown over. A massive shape appears behind Lyra. She thinks it's Iorek, but it's a strange bear. Two more appear and take Lyra prisoner.

Now that Lyra is completely alone, she's going to have to use the fact that she's a child to her advantage. Without adults to help her, it's now time for her to figure out how to weaponize who she is and what she knows.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The bears lead Lyra up the cliffs. At the top, they instruct her to look up at a massive stone building. They point to the carvings that show bears and Iofur Raknison winning wars, but Lyra only sees birds perched in the recesses and their droppings, which obscure the carvings. As they get deeper into the palace, Lyra smells the stench of refuse and rotting meat. They stop outside a door. A bear opens it, swats Lyra inside, and closes her in. Pan becomes a firefly so that Lyra can see. She sits and pulls the alethiometer out. It tells her that Iorek and Roger are a day away and that Iorek plans to break in and rescue her. Lyra begins to discuss this with Pan but stops when she hears a voice in the dark.

The droppings on the carvings make it clear that this palace isn't something that's truly representative of the bears. The carvings and the palace instead symbolize the fact that Iofur Raknison desperately wants to be human but, in important ways, is failing at doing that. This gives Lyra crucial information that can help her figure out how to handle her captivity and Iofur himself, given that he's not a normal bear—he's failing at being a bear and is also failing at being a human.

Pan flies up and illuminates a man. He introduces himself as Jotham Santelia of the University of Gloucester. When he hears that Lyra is from Oxford, he asks if the Palmerian Professor is still there and accuses him of plagiary. Lyra lies and says that the Palmerian Professor was writing about Dust. Santelia shouts insults about the Palmerian Professor. Lyra sits down and flatters Santelia into telling her about the bears. The bears apparently locked him up because he was writing about them. He says that Iofur Raknison initially invited him to set up a university, but the Palmerian Professor and others betrayed him.

Remember how the Scholars in the Retiring Room laughed when the Palmerian Professor mentioned Iofur wanting to set up a university. Their reaction makes it clear that the panserbjørne aren't a part of the academic human world or university system, and Santelia's experience suggests that there are major barriers to even trying to become a part of those systems and societies.

Lyra suggests that Iorek will believe Santelia and free him when he arrives, but Santelia says that Iorek can't come back. To the other bears, Iorek is no better than a seal, and they'll kill him before he can challenge Iofur to a fight. Scared and disappointed, Lyra asks where the other prisoners and Lord Asriel are. At this, Santelia cringes and shrinks back, saying that Iofur doesn't allow people to mention Asriel. He explains that Iofur is entirely besotted with Mrs. Coulter, which means that he's happy to imprison Lord Asriel for her and the Oblation Board. But, Iofur is *also* afraid of Lord Asriel, so he allows Asriel to have all the equipment he wants. Iofur won't be able to keep up the game for long.

It's especially telling that Iofur seems to be doing what he's doing out of both love and fear, emotions that make him vulnerable to manipulation and make it more likely that he's going to make a mistake somewhere along the line. The fact that he's allowing Lord Asriel to continue his research suggests that at some point, Iofur is going to attract the ire of the Magisterium.

Lyra sits back and Santelia goes back to sleep. She remembers that the Palmerian Professor said that more than anything, Iofur wants a dæmon and to be human. Lyra begins to plot. She's nearly asleep when a bear opens the door to throw in seal meat. She races to the bear and says that she needs to see Iofur to tell him something important about Iorek. She refuses to let the guard pass on her message and points out that it's a rule that the king has to know things first. The guard pauses and then leads Lyra out. They consult another guard and Lyra insists again that in the interest of politeness, she needs to speak to Iofur herself. When they agree, it confirms her suspicion that Iofur has introduced so many new rules that his underlings are confused as to how they should act.

The confusion of Iofur's underlings indicates that while they may want to curry favor with Iofur, they don't share his desire to be human and play by these human rules that, to the bears, probably seem objectively silly. As a human, however, Lyra has the upper hand, because it would make sense that she's an expert in human etiquette, something that will make her attractive to Iofur and possibly dangerous to ignore for Iofur's underlings.

A bear pushes Lyra into the lavishly decorated but still filthy throne room. Inside, bears wear jewelry instead of armor. Birds swoop above and Iofur sits on a throne. He's huger than Iorek and looks somehow human. Lyra feels afraid until she sees that Iofur has a stuffed doll on his knee, where a human's dæmon might sit. It's dressed like Mrs. Coulter. Lyra steps close and gives him greetings from her *and* from Iorek. She whispers that she has something about dæmons to tell him, which makes him send the other bears away. She tells him that she is Iorek's dæmon—and says that at Bolvanger, they're experimenting with creating artificial dæmons. She says that Iorek was the first bear to get a dæmon. Iofur is shocked.

The doll of Mrs. Coulter confirms that Iofur is fixating more on the dæmon portion of what makes humans human than on anything else. However, the filthiness of the throne room, the jewelry on the bears, and the doll suggest that in all ways, Iofur is failing at trying to make himself something he isn't. The fact that he believes Lyra's tale and is susceptible to trickery indicates that in addition to failing at being human, he's also failing at being a bear—bears aren't supposed to be able to be tricked.

Lyra tells Iofur that Iorek is on his way to steal her back, but she wants to be Iofur's dæmon instead. She says that Bolvanger was horrified when they saw how powerful Iorek was with a dæmon and decided to stop the experiments. She says that Iorek is coming to take over Svalbard. Iofur roars in anger. Lyra says that Iofur is the rightful ruler and there's a way for her to become his dæmon: he must defeat Iorek in single combat. Iofur paces and then tells Lyra to prove that she's a dæmon. She asks Iofur to ask her any question that only he knows the answer to, but says that she has to come up with the answer in private until she becomes his dæmon. He asks her to tell him the first creature he killed, and then sends her to an anteroom.

What Lyra tells Iofur suggests that having a dæmon makes a person—or a being in general—more powerful. However, while she once believed that this was somewhat true, now she understands that having a soul*—in whatever form—is what's truly important. In this regard, she's able to purposefully point Iofur in the direction of devaluing even further the fact that he's a bear, which, given that he believes her, means that he's increasingly more susceptible to trickery.*

The alethiometer tells Lyra that Iorek is four hours away and that she must trust him. It then says that Iofur killed his father, a grave crime that Iofur then concealed. Pan, as a tiny mouse, tells Lyra to flatter Iofur when she tells him. In the throne room, she declares that he's a god since he killed his father. He's impressed, but then asks her to tell him what Mrs. Coulter promised him last. Lyra returns from the anteroom and says that Mrs. Coulter promised to get Iofur baptized as a Christian in Geneva. Lyra says that she thinks that Mrs. Coulter lied; the Church won't agree to that unless Iofur has a dæmon, so he has to fight to win her. Iofur agrees, allows to let Lyra pretend that she still belongs to Iorek, and decides to follow Lyra's suggestion to tell the bears that he called Iorek here himself.

That Iofur committed such a horrific crime suggests that he's been uncomfortable as a bear for his entire life, as the novel implies that this is something totally out of the ordinary for a bear to do. Part of who Iofur is, essentially, the fact that he isn't a true bear at all, and in many ways behaves more like a human than a bear. Being baptized as a Christian would not only represent Iofur's shift to being human; it would also, presumably, signal that the panserbjørne are seen as equals in the eyes of the Magisterium—something that would be threatening for the Magisterium, given the bears' power.

CHAPTER TWENTY

As soon as Iofur announces that he's going to fight Iorek, the ceremonial preparations begin. Armorers check Iofur's armor and file his claws to points. Lyra feels sick as she watches Iofur test his claws' sharpness and excuses herself to go cry. When she consults the alethiometer, it again tells her to trust Iorek and reprimands her for asking again. Bears begin to fill the area around the combat ground, and Lyra notices that they all wear badges. Some carry little dolls like Iofur's and Lyra notices that when they see Iofur without his, they seem confused as to what to do with theirs. She realizes that the bears don't know who or what they are, thanks to Iofur.

When the alethiometer reprimands Lyra for asking again, it offers more evidence for the possibility that the alethiometer somehow has its own consciousness. Lyra's observations about how the bears behave shows just how devastating it can be to live in a society that desperately wants its subjects to change who they are—which is, incidentally, what the Magisterium is essentially trying to do with its experiments at Bolvanger.

Lyra looks up at the sky and longs for the witches or Ma Costa to sweep her away to safety and warmth. She cries from fear as the smiths adjust Iofur's armor for the last time. Lyra feels as though she has betrayed her friend: while Iofur's armor covers everything, Iorek's armor leaves much of his body exposed. As they hear a roar from a bear in a watchtower, Lyra excuses herself to go speak to Iorek. She walks across the combat ground and out the other side. In an instant, Iorek is next to her. She desperately explains how she tricked Iofur and tries to justify her behavior, but he praises her, as fighting Iofur is all he wants. He calls Lyra "Lyra Silvertongue." Together, they walk toward the other bears and Lyra briefly touches Iorek as he faces off with Iofur.

The desire to be swept away to safety is another reminder that Lyra is still a child wrapped up in things that are much bigger than she is. Given the bears' size in relation to her, walking through them alone reinforces physically how isolated Lyra is in the world right now. Iorek's praise helps Lyra come to a better understanding of how lies and trickery can be used for good goals. Fighting Iofur and winning will, importantly, mean that the bears once again get to remember who they are and act accordingly—something that will give them far more power and sway.

Iorek roars the terms of the fight: if Iofur wins, he'll be the king of the bears forever. If Iorek wins, he'll tear down the palace. Iofur roars and gives his own terms, insisting that he summoned Iorek for this fight. Lyra watches and realizes that though Iorek's armor isn't as splendid, it fits him and truly is his soul. Iofur, meanwhile, isn't content with his armor. She sees the other bears making the same comparison and realizes that this is a crossroads for the entire bear culture. Finally, the bears attack each other. Iorek destroys parts of Iofur's armor, though Iofur's attack makes Iorek bleed profusely. The bears continue to box and slash at each other. Iofur's armor is in poor shape, but Iorek begins to favor his left front paw.

Understanding the significance of this fight for the panserbjørne culture shows that Lyra is truly beginning to come of age and understand all the variety and cultural differences in the world. Further, seeing that Iorek's armor is undeniably his soul shows her clearly that one doesn't need a dæmon to be whole and have a soul; Iorek is who he is because he's comfortable with his soul and what it can do for him. Similarly, Iofur's armor appears weak, which suggests that Iofur is similarly weak.

Iofur taunts Iorek and backs him up across the ground. Lyra cries and knows that Iorek is going to die. In truth, Iorek is tricking Iofur—Iofur doesn't want to be a bear, so he's susceptible to tricks like a human. Finally, as Iofur rears up, Iorek leaps and tears Iofur's lower jaw off. Iorek grabs Iofur's throat and the massive bear dies. Iorek performs the final ritual: cutting out Iofur's heart and eating it. The bears roar their approval, tear off their badges, and begin to dismantle the palace. Lyra shouts that there are human prisoners in the palace, so Iorek commands that the prisoners be brought out first. Lyra helps Iorek tend to his wounds and then curls up to sleep.

Iorek's victory—though brutal in its execution—more broadly champions the idea that beings should be comfortable with who they are, no matter who that may be—and that sense of self-knowledge is what allows people to be successful in the wider world. This offers a hopeful note in terms of the Magisterium, as it suggests that the organization will ultimately be unsuccessful in trying to fundamentally change humans and who they are.

A bear wakes Lyra up and tells her to come to Iorek. When they get to an assembly of bears, she sees that Roger is there too. He says that he and Iorek fell out of the balloon and he has no idea where Lee Scoresby or the witches are. The young bear shows Lyra and Roger how to eat warm, raw seal blubber and kidneys and then leads them to Iorek and his counselors. The bears allow the children to join the circle and tell Lyra how Iofur ruled them like they were under a spell. Mrs. Coulter had given Iofur a drug, which he used to orchestrate Iorek's wrongful killing of another bear.

That Mrs. Coulter was able to introduce human tools (like this drug) into the bears and use them to control Iofur shows again how powerful human systems are in Lyra's world, even against creatures as strong and normally self-assured as the panserbjørne. Depriving them of that self-assurance is exactly what allowed Mrs. Coulter to control Iofur.

A counselor, Søren Eisarson, says that since human laws don't apply on Svalbard, Iofur was going to let Mrs. Coulter set up a place worse than Bolvanger and do things that would be illegal elsewhere. Lyra consults the alethiometer and discovers that Lee Scoresby is airborne somewhere far away. She ascertains that Mrs. Coulter is on her way to Svalbard with machine guns and Tartars. Mrs. Coulter had planned to overpower Iofur, but will learn that Iorek is king from her spies. Lyra then says that Mrs. Coulter is going to kill Lord Asriel because she's afraid of what he's doing and wants to do it herself. Mrs. Coulter is also after Lyra and something that Lyra has, but that Lord Asriel *also* wants. Lyra thinks that they both want the alethiometer, but she can't quite figure it out. Iorek offers to take Lyra to Lord Asriel.

It's important to note that Lyra can't quite figure out what the alethiometer is trying to tell her; given how similar situations have historically gone for her, this suggests that there's tragedy ahead. It's also worth noting that Mrs. Coulter is, at this point, driven by fear of something. This suggests that she's going to be even more unreasonable than usual, given how fear tends to make the novel's characters even less likely to behave normally and rationally.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Lyra and Roger each ride a young bear while Iorek runs ahead of them. Lyra thinks of the bear Søren Eisarson telling her about the negotiations with Lord Asriel. The bears generally treat prisoners well so they can use them as bargaining chips later, but Lord Asriel made the bears wary. He was haughty and imperious, and bullied Iofur into getting to choose where he was imprisoned. They allowed him to set up on a high spot and built him a house with fireplaces and windows, per his specifications. They got him the laboratory materials he asked for, and he set to work on something that terrified the Oblation Board.

Given what Søren Eisarson said about him, Lord Asriel reads as the polar opposite of Iofur: he's extremely confident in who he is and knows how to use that confidence to get whatever he wants, whereas Iofur ruled with fear and from a place of insecurity. Being a prisoner of the bears, however, likely protected Lord Asriel from the Oblation Board to a degree, given how strong the bears have historically been.

Iorek stops the march and points up a ridge to a huge building with large lit windows. They head up the final slope and into the courtyard. Lyra and Roger get down and stumble to the door. Thorold answers the door, is surprised to see Lyra, and lets Lyra and Roger in. Lord Asriel looks eager and triumphant but when he sees Lyra, he looks at her with horror and tries to send her away. Roger then steps forward and Lord Asriel's color starts to return. Lyra says that she brought him the alethiometer and introduces Roger. Lord Asriel goes outside to talk to Iorek and orders Thorold to run the children a bath and feed them.

Lyra's reception raises a number of questions regarding what exactly Lord Asriel is up to and whether or not Lyra is doing what she's supposed to do. Given Lord Asriel's history with Mrs. Coulter and his cruel streak, it's possible that he also thinks little of children who aren't Lyra—and therefore, needs a child who isn't Lyra for something sinister.

Lyra sits outside the bathroom while Roger bathes. Roger admits that he's afraid of Lord Asriel and says that it was odd how he calmed down as soon as he saw Roger. Lyra assures him that everything is fine, but Roger says that he's more afraid of Lord Asriel than of Mrs. Coulter. Lyra offers to consult the alethiometer, but Roger says he'd rather not know the future after his horrible experience with the Gobblers. After they bathe and eat, Thorold takes Roger to bed and sends Lyra to speak with Lord Asriel.

Roger believes that there's little use in knowing the future when it's going to come for him anyway—in his understanding, it's better to be surprised. Importantly, not consulting the alethiometer in this situation means that Lyra continues to move forward not knowing what she's doing, per the prophecy: learning that Roger is the sacrifice will ruin Lyra's chances of success.

Lyra sits across from Lord Asriel. They discuss that Iorek is now king and Lord Asriel wants to know why Iorek and John Faa are involved. Lyra says that first, he needs to confirm that he's her father. When he does, she reprimands him for not telling her. Lord Asriel brushes this off, but Lyra bursts out that she doesn't know why she even brought the alethiometer to Lord Asriel and put herself through so much danger only to be received like this by her own father. She declares that Lord Asriel isn't human and that she loves Iorek more than him. Lyra puts the alethiometer down and says that she's going back to the palace with Iorek to fight Mrs. Coulter and the Oblation Board, who are coming to kill them all. Lord Asriel says calmly that they won't, which perplexes Lyra.

Declaring that Lyra loves Iorek more than Lord Asriel speaks volumes about what she's learned about love, trust, and souls over the course of her journey. While Lord Asriel has never really been there for her in a meaningful way—and has lied to her—Iorek has done everything in his power to support her and keep her safe. As far as she's concerned, Iorek is a far more moral individual than Lord Asriel is because of this. This gives Lyra the sense that going forward, if she wants to earn people's trust, she'll need to emulate Iorek and not Lord Asriel.

Lord Asriel asks Lyra for her story. When she finishes, she asks him to tell her what Dust is and why it's so scary. Lord Asriel says that it's what makes the alethiometer work, and that the Church has always been aware of it. He explains how Rusakov discovered a new elementary particle that's attracted to adults, but not children—until their dæmons settle. Because this discovery would have an impact on the church, he announced it in Geneva. The inspector suspected Dr. Rusakov of being possessed, but he wasn't lying. They then decided that, since Dust was real, it's physical evidence for original sin. Lord Asriel asks Lyra to bring him the Bible and reminds her of Adam and Eve. God told them to not eat the fruit, and before they did, they were like children and their dæmons could take any form.

Learning that Dust is physical evidence for original sin—essentially, the ability to make choices and know right from wrong—it becomes clear what the goal is in cutting children from their dæmons: it would preserve them in an innocent, childish state forever (in theory, at least). The way that the Church silenced Rusakov and his teaching shows how it will stop at nothing to control the flow of information, especially when that information could have major implications for church teachings.

Lord Asriel reads the passage of Genesis in which the serpent tempts Eve by saying that her dæmon will assume its "true form." When she and Adam eat the fruit, their dæmons settle, but they also see good and evil and feel ashamed of their nakedness. Lord Asriel closes the book and says that sin came to the world when Adam and Eve's dæmons became fixed. Lyra asks if religion isn't true in the same way that engineering or chemistry are. Lord Asriel tells her to think of it like the square root of -1: it *doesn't* exist, but a person can calculate things using it. He declares that Dust is proof that *something* happens when "innocence changed into experience." He shows her where in the Bible they got the idea to call it Dust.

Remember what the sailor Jerry said about the positive aspects of a settled dæmon: a person then will be able to learn things about their personality depending on which animal their dæmon settles on. This suggests that a major part of growing up and gaining experience, within this worldview, is coming to a better sense of self. Children, and people without original sin more broadly, don't have that sense of self that adults do, which, incidentally, would make them easier to control.

Lyra asks about the Gobblers, and Lord Asriel explains that Mrs. Coulter started the General Oblation Board. He says that it's under the Magisterium, and the Magisterium can support it until it starts to fail, at which point they can pretend it wasn't licensed. Mrs. Coulter is ambitious and alluring, so she was the perfect person to investigate Dust for the Magisterium. Lyra asks why the Church would cut children in the first place. Lord Asriel says that they've done this before, when they used to castrate boys so that they could sing treble parts their whole lives. Intercision looks gentle in comparison, even if it isn't. This is why Bolvanger is in the far North and is a secret.

By situating intercision in a greater history of abuses by the Magisterium, Lord Asriel alludes to the many ways in which the Magisterium in this world and in the reader's world have committed abuses throughout history to maintain power. Like with intercision experiments in the novel, the Catholic Church often recruited poor boys, which shows again how the church more specifically preys on vulnerable populations as it grabs power.

Lord Asriel says that intercision was Mrs. Coulter's idea; she suspected that a dæmon settling and Dust gathering were connected. In her travels, she's seen other cultures successfully separate dæmons from bodies. Lord Asriel explains that the cut also releases lots of energy, but no one else has thought to harness it. Lyra thinks it's still too cruel. She asks what Lord Asriel is doing. He says that he's after the source of Dust, which exists in the universe that they can see through the Aurora. He explains that there are many other parallel universes, and that if he can create a burst of energy and cross over into the other world, he can destroy the origin of Dust. He says he's going to destroy death itself. Then he dismisses Lyra, insisting that he doesn't need the alethiometer. Lyra wonders what the Master really wanted her to do.

Because Lyra is so fixated on finally figuring out what Dust is and on bringing the alethiometer to Lord Asriel, she misses the importance of his asides about the energy that intercision releases and what it can do. While not necessarily something that Lyra misses just because she's a child, her inability to put two and two together here means that the prophecy can continue to come true in the correct fashion: she doesn't know that she's brought Roger here for Lord Asriel to sacrifice and create this burst of energy.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Thorold shakes Lyra awake and tells her that Lord Asriel packed instruments, took Roger, and left. He says that Lord Asriel needed a child to finish his experiment. Lyra falls out of bed with a scream and realizes what she's done: she brought Lord Asriel Roger, whom he needs for an experiment. Thorold helps Lyra dress in her furs and Iorek leaps up when Lyra calls for him. She jumps onto Iorek's back and they race after the sledge tracks with the other bears. They see Lord Asriel ahead and Iorek nervously stops to listen. Lyra hears the Aurora beginning to crackle and a bear yells that he sees witches. A bear throws Lyra forward into the snow and witches' arrows begin to fly toward the bears.

Lyra's desire to save Roger stems as much from her innate sense of loyalty to her friend as it does from what she's learned about morality over the course of her journey. This shows that as she grows up, part of figuring out who she is means that she's going to hone parts of her personality and identity that were already there, rather than just acquiring new information and coming to a new understanding of her world.

Lyra watches the bears fight the witches but then hears Mrs. Coulter's zeppelin approaching with troops. The Bears erect their fire hurler and send coal flying at the zeppelin. The third shot hits the gas bag and it bursts into flame. Witches help the soldiers on board to get off safely, and with the battle now on the ground, Iorek grabs Lyra and they race after Lord Asriel. Iorek promises to find Lee Scoresby and to tell Serafina Pekkala what happened. They stop when they reach a deep chasm with an ice bridge. Sledge tracks run across it, but Iorek refuses to try. Lyra thanks him for his help and he watches her make her way across. The bridge holds until the very end. Once Lyra is across, Iorek returns to his bears.

After Iorek carries Lyra up the mountain, she symbolically gains independence: she lost Lord Asriel and Roger at the bottom of the hill and now, as she crosses the bridge alone, she's going to lose Iorek too. This shows that Lyra is transforming from a child into a young adult thanks to her experiences and what she now knows about Dust and the Magisterium's activities. All of this knowledge, however, means that she also has to go it alone.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Lyra feels weak, alone, and frightened. Pan comforts her as she wonders out loud why people do these horrible things to children. When Lyra composes herself, she walks along and admires the brilliant Aurora. Pan flies up and points Lyra in the right direction. He says that Lord Asriel has instruments laid out and that Roger is stuck. Suddenly, the Aurora flickers and Lyra thinks that she can feel the Dust. Roger cries out for Lyra and Lyra runs to him as Pan changes form rapidly in distress. When Lyra reaches the ridge, she sees that Stelmaria has Roger's dæmon in her mouth while Lord Asriel fiddles with wires and batteries and brushes Roger aside.

Feeling the Dust symbolically suggests that this event is very adult for Lyra: she can physically detect that she's out of her element as a child. Stelmaria's participation in Lord Asriel's experiment indicates even more strongly that Lord Asriel is cruel and unfeeling, given that his conscience isn't perturbed by the gross injustice they're committing here.

As Lord Asriel connects wires, the Aurora becomes even brighter. Lyra sees a wire heading into the Aurora and knows that a witch put it there. Lord Asriel beckons to Roger and Lyra shouts for Roger to run. Pan attacks Stelmaria and the two young dæmons fight her. Lyra fights the thick Dust and sees palm trees and boulevards in the sky. She pulls Roger away, but Stelmaria catches Roger's dæmon again. Lyra and Roger start to slip off a cliff and can't stop as Lord Asriel attaches a wire to Roger's dæmon. As Roger is torn from his dæmon by the fall, a bolt of light shoots into the sky and illuminates the city with a tearing sound. Lyra stops falling.

In this instance, Lyra has fulfilled most of her destiny: she unwittingly brought Roger to his death and, with the path to the other universe illuminated, she can move on and fulfill the rest of her fate in the next installment of the series. Even though Lyra's journey makes sense now, the fact that Roger's death is still heartbreaking shows that destiny isn't always easy or good for everyone—and that trying to use one's free will to change it is futile.

Lyra watches the golden monkey and Stelmaria meet and touch each other. Mrs. Coulter steps into Lord Asriel's arms. Lord Asriel invites her to come with him and says that this will mean the end of the Church. Mrs. Coulter is nervous and refuses to come. They argue about Lyra and Lord Asriel kisses Mrs. Coulter, but Lyra thinks the kiss looks cruel. Their dæmons behave strangely; Stelmaria presses her claws into the monkey as the monkey relaxes. Lord Asriel again invites Mrs. Coulter to go with him and says he doesn't care about her lies or her lovers. They kiss again and when they break apart, Lord Asriel says that if she doesn't come, he'll forget her instantly. Mrs. Coulter refuses, and watches Lord Asriel and Stelmaria step into the other world. Then she walks back down the hill, sobbing.

The behavior that Lyra observes between the golden monkey and Stelmaria is likely so foreign to her because it's a consequence of being a sexual adult and attracting Dust, things that Lyra hasn't yet experienced. Lord Asriel's cruelty toward Mrs. Coulter shows again that he's not someone that Lyra should trust. Specifically, when Lyra pegs the kiss as cruel and violent, her role as someone able to interpret the truth suggests that the reader should take this seriously. Lyra's idealized vision of her parents' relationship might be just that: idealized, and not real.

Lyra looks at the city in the sky. The sun from it starts to melt the ice on Roger's clothes. Lyra holds his body and feels betrayed by Lord Asriel. Pan scratches her hand and confirms that Lord Asriel is going to find the source of Dust and destroy it. He says that the Oblation Board, the Church, Bolvanger, and Mrs. Coulter all want to do away with Dust, so Dust must actually be *good*. Excitedly, Pan says that they believed the adults even when they saw them doing evil things. They stare at each other, and Lyra says that they too could look for Dust and maybe get to the source before Lord Asriel. Lyra and Pan decide that this time, they'll ask every question they can think of and go it alone, even though they're never really alone. Lyra says they still have the alethiometer. She puts Roger's body down and she and Pan step into the sky.

The idea that Dust and original sin might be a good thing is wildly heretical, but Pan also gets at the idea that the ability to choose and gain experience is exactly what makes humans human. Having decided this, Pan and Lyra's fight becomes one for all of humanity and its right to exist in a knowledgeable and free state. Specifically, rejecting what the Magisterium says indicates that going forward, Lyra is going to rely more on herself and what she can do, which will push her closer to maturity, experience, and knowledge.

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